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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Parl Winter Session sees a stormy start

PM attacks Oppn; LS adjourned, RS sees walkout over SIR

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The opening day of the Winter Session of Parliament was marked by repeated adjournments in the Lok Sabha and an opposition walkout in the Rajya Sabha over demands for an immediate debate on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The government maintained it was open to discussion but refused to commit to a timeline.

Ahead of proceedings, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking to reporters in the Parliament House complex, accused the Opposition of turning Parliament into a "warm-up arena" for elections or an outlet to vent frustration after electoral defeats. Stressing that Parliament was "not a place for drama but delivery", he said he was willing to offer tips to help the Opposition bring "positivity" into politics.

In the Lok Sabha, disruptions continued as Opposition MPs repeatedly trooped into the Well demanding a debate on SIR. Speaker Om Birla warned them against lowering the dignity of the House as two adjournments were forced before the Lok Sabha was finally adjourned for the day at around 2.20 pm.

Amid the uproar, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced two key bills: the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025. The legislation seeks to repurpose levies on "sin goods" including tobacco, pan masala and related products, ahead of the scheduled phase-out of the GST compensation cess. The new cess proposals aim to impose charges on the manufacture and production of specified goods such as tobacco and pan masala.

The Lok Sabha also passed the Manipur GST Bill, intended to replace an ordinance issued to implement GST 2.0 reforms in the state. In the Rajya Sabha, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju reiterated the government's willingness to discuss SIR and broader electoral reforms but urged the Opposition not to insist on an immediate debate. Unsatisfied with his response, members of several opposition parties staged a walkout. Earlier, Chairperson C.P Radhakrishnan had disallowed nine Opposition notices on various issues, including SIR, triggering protests.

Radhakrishnan presided over the House for the first time since taking office as Vice President in September, following the abrupt resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Ruling NDA MPs accused the Opposition of adopting a "well-thought-out strategy" to disrupt proceedings and warned that they risk being "washed out" again in upcoming elections if they fail to learn from the Bihar Assembly results. *—PTI*

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In the Lok Sabha, disruptions continued as Opposition MPs repeatedly trooped into the Well demanding a debate

PHOTO: PTI

Enjoy the weather: PM as Delhi chokes

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened his customary remarks before the Winter Session of Parliament on Monday with a comment that raised eyebrows: "Aap bhi mausam ka mazaa lijiye" ("You too should enjoy the weather"). He went on to say Parliament should be a place for "delivery, not drama".

The remark drew sharp criticism from Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who questioned whether the PM was aware of Delhi's worsening air crisis.

"What weather should people enjoy?" Priyanka asked. "At least look outside to see what is happening in the country. 2.2 million Delhi children are suffering irreversible lung damage. But PM says, 'Mausam ka maza lijiye'. This is the cost of Vote Chori," the Congress *—PTI*

Centre probes GPS spoofing at airports

The Central government has asked the Wireless Monitoring Organisation (WMO) to investigate recent GPS spoofing incidents reported at major airports, including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai. Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu told the Rajya Sabha that some flights experienced GPS interference while approaching Delhi's IGIA on runway 10, prompting contingency procedures, though other runways with conventional aids were unaffected. He said the Airports Authority of India has requested WMO to identify the source. *—PTI*

Death toll crosses 1,000 in floods across Asia

COLOMBO, 1 DEC

More than 1,000 people have been killed across Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia in less than a week as relentless rains triggered flooding and landslides, leaving vast areas submerged and tens of thousands displaced. Indonesia has reported at least 502 deaths, Sri Lanka 335, Thailand 176, and Malaysia three. Authorities caution that the full toll is still unclear, with hundreds missing across the region. *—PTI*

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Woman marries dead beau: 6 held for honour killing

NANDED, 1 DEC

The parents and brothers of a woman who "married" her boyfriend's corpse after he was beaten to death in Maharashtra's Nanded are among six people arrested for his murder. Twenty-year-old Saksham Tate was killed on Thursday evening after a fight with the brother of his girlfriend, 21-year-old Aanchal Mamidwar. Police have named eight accused in what they have described as a dishonour killing: Gajanan Balaji Mamidwar (Aanchal's father), Jayshree Mamidwar (mother), Sahil Gajanan Mamidwar (elder brother), Somesh Subhash, Vedant Ashok Kundekar, Chetan Balaji Mamidwar, an unnamed person, and Aanchal's 17-year-old younger brother. Six have been arrested, while two are absconding. According to police, Aanchal's younger brother fired at Tate, piercing his ribs, before smashing a tile on his head. Aanchal later told reporters that her family had betrayed her and alleged that two policemen had provoked her brothers to attack Tate. *—Agencies*

BLOs PROTEST IN KOLKATA

Booth Level Officers protest excessive workload during the ongoing SIR outside the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Kolkata on Monday. The stir comes amid multiple BLO deaths ***PHOTO: PTI*** ***>>>More on Page 3***

Cannot blame farmers, stubble burning for Delhi pollution: SC

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday said the air pollution issue in the Delhi-NCR cannot be treated as a "customary" case to be listed only during winter, and that it will be taken up twice a month to find short and long-term solutions to the menace.

In a significant shift from the usual narrative, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said, "The issue of stubble burning should not unnecessarily become a political issue or an ego issue."

Questioning the trend to blame stubble burning, CJI Kant, who hails from a farmer's family from Hissar asked, "There was stubble burning during Covid, but people could still see clear blue skies. This indicates other factors."

"We do not want to comment on stubble burning as it is incorrect to blame farmers who are not represented here," the CJI said.

Seeking clarity on anti-pollution measures, the CJI asked the Centre to spell out steps taken by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and others to tackle air pollution.

It listed the next hearing on 10 December.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, referred to key contributors of air pollution, saying, "stubble burning, vehicle exhaust, construction dust, road dust and biomass burning are considered responsible. "I can give a list of steps taken under each of the heads," she said.

Amicus curiae Aparajita Singh submitted that vehicle pollution and dust remain the biggest contributors to Delhi's poor AQI. *—PTI*

People walk along the railway tracks on a smoggy winter morning in New Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

> **What magic wand can a judicial forum exercise? I know this is hazardous for Delhi-NCR...The solutions can be given by the domain experts only** —Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India

CBI TO NOW PROBE DIGITAL ARRESTS

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the CBI to launch a pan-India probe into digital arrest scam cases and asked the RBI why it was not using artificial intelligence to find out and freeze bank accounts used by cyber criminals.

Digital arrest is a cybercrime in which fraudsters pose as law enforcement officials to intimidate victims through audio and video calls and extort money from them.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked states, including opposition ruled West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana, to allow the CBI to probe digital arrest cases.

It issued a notice to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and sought its response on why Artificial Intelligence (AI) or machine learning was not employed to freeze bank accounts used in cyber fraud cases.

The bench also directed the CBI to take assistance from Interpol to reach cyber criminals operating from offshore tax havens. *—PTI*

Phones to pre-install govt cyber app

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The telecom ministry has informally asked all smartphone manufacturers to preload all new devices with a cybersecurity app, a government order showed. This is considered a move that can spark a tussle with Apple, which dislikes such directives.

Data shows that the app, launched in January, has helped to recover around 7,00,000 lost phones.

Apple, which has locked horns with the telecom regulator over the development of a government anti-spam mobile app, is among the companies bound by the new order.

The 28 November order gives smartphone companies 90 days to ensure that the government's Sanchar Saathi app is pre-installed on new phones, with a provision that users cannot disable it.

For devices already in the supply chain, the order requires manufacturers to push the app to phones via software updates.

While Apple pre-installs its own apps on phones, its policies prohibit the installation of any third-party app.

Apple, Samsung, and Xiaomi did not respond to requests for comment. The telecom ministry also did not respond.

Two industry sources said they were concerned there had been no consultation before the order was issued.

In the order, the government said the app was essential to combat "serious endangerment" of telecom cybersecurity from duplicate or spoofed IMEI numbers, which enable scams and network misuse. *—PTI*

HC HALTS RECRUITMENT UNDER KARNATAKA'S NEW SC/ST QUOTA LAW

BENGALURU, 30 NOV

The Karnataka High Court has prohibited the state government from issuing new recruitment notifications under the 2022 Act, which increased quotas for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). This restriction will remain in effect until further orders.

The court's bench, comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha, allowed the government to proceed with recruitment processes already commenced before 19 November, 2025, even if they adhere to the raised reservation percentages. However, all appointments made through these processes will be subject to the outcome of petitions challenging the law.

The interim order was issued while hearing public interest litigations filed by Mahendra Kumar Mitra from Raichur and Mahesh from Bengaluru, questioning the law's constitutionality, particularly the increase in SC reservation from 15 per cent to 17 per cent and ST reservation from 3 per cent to 7 per cent. The court noted that the total reservation in the state has now reached 56 per cent, with Other Backward Classes (OBCs) remaining at 32 per cent. The court mandated that all appointment or promotion orders specify they are provisional and dependent on the court's final judgement. *—PTI*

AFTER SOCIAL MEDIA BOOM

'Rage bait' is Oxford's word of the year for 2025

LONDON, 1 DEC

'Rage bait,' or online content deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage, was on Monday named the word of the year by Oxford University Press, the publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary.

The Oxford University Press (OUP) said the term is a noun which describes online content that is designed to be provocative or offensive, typically posted in order to increase traffic to a particular web page.

It found that the word has increased threefold in usage in the last 12 months, based on its language monitoring data.

"The fact that the word 'rage bait' exists and has seen such a dramatic surge in usage means we're increasingly aware of online manipulation tactics," said Casper Grathwohl, the President of Oxford Languages at OUP.

The linguist pointed out that while the 2024 word of the year 'brain rot' captured the mental drain of endless scrolling, the 2025 choice shines a light on the content wilfully designed to spark outrage and drive clicks.

The OUP's choice for the year followed three days of online voting in which more than 30,000 people had their say.

- It found that the word has increased threefold in usage in the last 12 months, based on its language monitoring data.

The other words on the 2025 shortlist were 'aura farming,' or the cultivation of an impressive, attractive or charismatic persona image by presenting oneself in a way intended subtly to convey an air of confidence, coolness or mystique.

The verb 'biohack' to attempt to improve one's physical or mental performance, health, longevity or wellbeing by altering one's diet, exercise routine, or lifestyle was also in the run. *—PTI*

Karnataka introduces online Digital e-Stamp system

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

The Karnataka government has launched the Digital e-Stamp (DeS) system, aiming to enhance efficiency, transparency, and security in document stamping. Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda announced that citizens can now generate stamp papers online from the comfort of their homes, 24/7, eliminating the need for intermediaries.

"As Karnataka moves toward complete digital registration, it has become essential to eliminate vulnerabilities by adopting a fully digital stamping system," Gowda stated. The initiative comes in response to the Telgi scam, which revealed significant fraud involving counterfeit stamp papers. Following that, physical stamp papers were discontinued to bolster security.

Previously, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited was tasked with issuing e-stamp papers but faced issues such as duplication and misclassification. Now, the Digital e-Stamp system allows users to create stamps with secure digital payments, embedding stamp content directly into documents to ensure authenticity. Documents can also be digitally signed using Aadhaar-based eSign or digital signatures, promoting a fully digital execution process. Gowda touted the system as "paperless" and "eco-friendly", decreasing reliance on stamp papers. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

DGR orders drive against female foeticide

MYSURU, 1 DEC

State Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Monday directed officials to intensify efforts against female foeticide by strengthening awareness campaigns in districts reporting such cases. Chairing a health department review meeting at the Regional Commissioner's office, he instructed officers to collect sex-ratio data from April to October and take targeted measures to curb violations. He also asked officials to identify high-risk pregnancies early and ensure safe deliveries to reduce female mortality. Noting that 914 infants died in Mysuru division between April and October, the minister announced plans to increase ICU beds, ventilators and other facilities in government hospitals. He also urged enhanced screening for cancer, blood pressure and diabetes under the Griha Arogya scheme. Currently, 143 children are receiving daycare chemotherapy in Mysuru division, and 1,646 people have benefited from the Dr Puneeth Rajkumar Hrudayajyothi scheme. —*Salar News*

Yeshwanthpur MLA seeks freeze on new bar licences

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Yeshwanthpur MLA, ST Somashekhar has reportedly, written to the GBA (formerly BBMP) Chief Commissioner expressing concern over the growing number of bars and restaurants in his constituency. He noted that during his recent visits residents repeatedly complained about the rapid rise of such establishments. Urging the BBMP to stop issuing new licences, he highlighted public inconvenience and strong community objections. While GBA grants trade licences, liquor licences are issued by the Excise Department. The MLA's appeal aims to prevent future violations seen in areas like Indiranagar and Koramangala, where bars often operate in residential zones and exceed noise limits past 10 pm —*Salar News*

Kolar cops step up to enforce helmet rule amid chilly morning

KOLAR, 1 DEC

Police in Kolar town began enforcing the mandatory helmet rule on a chilly Monday morning. Led by Superintendent of Police B Nikhil, officers towed vehicles of riders without helmets to the DAR station, asking vehicle owners to return with helmets to reclaim them. Meanwhile, Superintendent of Police Nikhil handed roses to compliant riders and said last month's awareness drive had lifted helmet use to 70–80 per cent. Constable Naveen said officers were advising violators to buy a helmet for Rs 500 instead of paying an equivalent fine. —*Salar News*

Mysuru marks 'Station Mahotsav' at railway station

MYSURU, 1 DEC

The Mysuru Division celebrated Station Mahotsav on Monday, with DRM Mudit Mittal highlighting the Maharajas of Mysore's pivotal role in developing the Mysore State Railway, which merged with Southern Railway in 1951 and later became part of South Western Railway in 2003. Mysuru Railway Station, an NSG-2 category facility, handles 106 trains, serves 60,000 passengers daily, and earns Rs 21–25 lakh per day. Equipped with escalators, lifts, Wi-Fi and Divyangjan-friendly infra, it is undergoing a Rs 395.73-crore redevelopment, including three new platform lines and four pit lines. The event featured a heritage gallery visit and performances. —*Salar News*

It's breakfast 2.0 for CM and DyCM amid tussle

DKS calls CM his brother; Siddaramaiah says no invite yet

BENGALURU/ MYSURU, 1 DEC

In a renewed show of unity amid an ongoing leadership tussle, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is likely to visit Deputy CM DK Shivakumar's residence for breakfast on 2 December, days after the duo held a similar meeting to project solidarity.

"He asked me on Saturday to come for breakfast on Tuesday. I have not received a call yet. If invited, I will go," Siddaramaiah told reporters. Shivakumar, when asked, said the matter was between him and the CM, adding that the two leaders were working "like brothers".

The breakfast diplomacy follows Saturday's meeting at CM's residence, held at the insistence of the Congress high command to defuse rising tensions over the alleged leadership rotation pact between the two leaders. After the meeting, both asserted there would be "no confusion" going forward.

With the Belagavi legislature session beginning on 8 December, the latest outreach is widely seen as a signal that Siddaramaiah will continue as CM for the time being. Speculation of a change in leadership had intensified after the Congress government crossed the halfway mark of its five-year term on 20 November.

Shivakumar dismissed suggestions of groupism within the party, accusing the media of creating factions. "There are no groups, you are creating groups. I have 140 MLAs with me. When it comes to the party, we will take everyone together," he said.

In Mysuru, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao urged the public and media not to politicise the breakfast meetings. "These are informal platforms where leaders discuss various matters. There are no internal differences; only outsiders are speaking about it," he said. Praising the CM's dealing with situation, he added, "Siddaramaiah has shown maturity and will sort out all issues." On Mutt heads demanding that leaders from their communities be made CM, Gundu Rao said every citizen has the right to express an opinion, but the Congress high command will take the final decision in the interest of the party and the state. —*PTI*

CM Siddaramaiah and DyCM DK Shivakumar interact after paying tribute to late Kengal Hanumanthaiah, in Bengaluru ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

CM, DKS SLAM BJP OVER FIR AGAINST SONIA, RAHUL

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah accused the BJP of "political revenge" after the Delhi police registered an FIR against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, and others in the National Herald case.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar termed the Delhi police's move as "unfair" and said, "There is a limit to harassment."

The Delhi Police filed an FIR against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, and other accused in the National Herald case, as per a complaint by the ED in connection with its money laundering probe into the case that alleges that the Congress first family "abused" their position for personal gains.

"The BJP is trying to take revenge," Siddaramaiah told reporters in response to a question on Monday. —*PTI*

YOUTH SEEK THEIR RIGHT

Over 35 protesters including women were detained ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Govt job aspirants protest over 2 lakh vacancies in Dharwad

DHARWAD, 1 DEC

Many job aspirants protest ed here on Monday, demanding that the Karnataka government launch a recruitment drive to fill 2 lakh vacancies in all departments.

Police said 35 people, including women, were detained.

The demonstration was organised by Janasamanyara Vedike and Udyogakank shigala Horata Samiti.

The hopefuls had planned to march from Srinagar Circle to the District Commissioner's office, but police intervened and detained them.

Students from different parts of the city assembled in the Srinagar area and raised anti-government slogans.

They urged the government to announce a clear policy during the winter session of the state legislature to fill all vacant posts and introduce more student-friendly measures.

Police had earlier denied permission for the protest, citing traffic and law-and-order issues. Despite this, the organisers went ahead with the demonstration.

Speaking to reporters later, Dharwad Police Commissioner N. Shashikumar said the job hopefuls had sought permission, but it was rejected due to security concerns.

"They claimed around 30,000 students would join the protest. Some PG and library science students had spoken about holding an indefinite dharna and blocking junctions. We asked for clarification on who would lead the protest and how many would participate," he said.

He said that around 80,000 students live in the area and that it is surrounded by schools, colleges and hospitals.

"If miscreants misuse such a situation in a student-populated area, law and order could deteriorate. So permission was not granted," he said.

The commissioner said the organisers failed to provide complete information to the authorities. —*PTI*

7-8 legislators, ministers eyeing CM post: Vijayendra

SIRSI, 1 DEC

BJP president BY Vijayendra on Monday claimed that the state's administrative machinery has "completely collapsed" as competition within the Congress for the chief minister's post intensifies, with seven to eight senior legislators and ministers allegedly in the race.

Speaking to reporters, he said the Congress government has "neglected farmers in distress" while engaged in internal power tussles.

BJP, he added, will press for discussions on farmers' welfare, issues concerning north Karnataka, and irrigation during the Belagavi winter session from 8 December.

Vijayendra dismissed suggestions that the BJP might join hands with a Congress faction, saying the mandate placed the BJP in opposition and it intends to remain an "effective opposition".

Accusing the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah government of discontinuing several farmer-centric initiatives, he noted that the previous BJP government provided an additional Rs 4,000 under PM-Kisan and implemented the Raita Vidya Nidhi scholarship scheme, both of which he said have been halted.

No minister, he alleged, has visited the farmers who were devasted bby floods. —*PTI*

HDK bats for Gita inclusion in schools

SHIVAMOGGA, 1 DEC

- Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy assured that he will discuss with Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan the inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita in school and university curricula.

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy assured that he will discuss with Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan the inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita in school and university curricula.

The JD(S) leader was responding to BJP leader KS Eshwarappa's request that the Bhagavad Gita should be included in school curriculum, during the Sri Bhagavad Gita Abhiyan programme here on Sunday, says a release by his office.

Kumaraswamy said the Bhagavad Gita should be taught at all levels of education, not just in schools and colleges.

He assured that he would bring the matter to the attention of the Centre.

Kumaraswamy also suggested that the Ramayana and Mahabharata should be taught at the school level. Teaching these epics is necessary to guide society, he said.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent recitation of the Bhagavad Gita at an event in Udupi, he said, "Through this, he gave a clear message about the protection of our religion and heritage. It is a lesson for all of us."

"In our childhood, elders used to tell us stories from the Ramayana and Mahabharata at home. Similarly, teachers used to tell us these stories in school. However, now that practice is missing. If you turn on the news channels, only bad news comes. The Bhagavad Gita should be taught to children to set this right. The Ramayana and Mahabharata should also be taught," he asserted. —*PTI*

State aims to eliminate HIV/ AIDS by 2030

MYSURU, 1 DEC

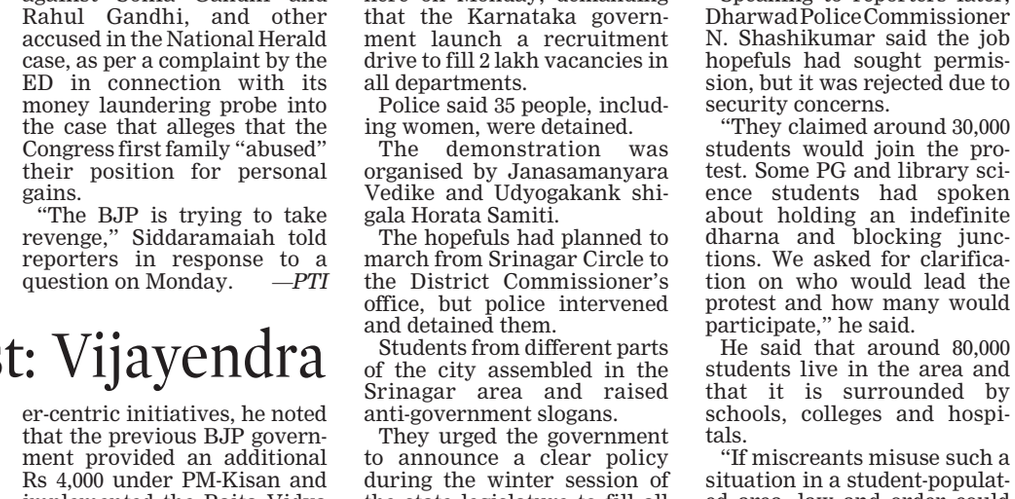
State Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Monday urged citizens to join the State Government's campaign against HIV/AIDS, aiming to make the State free of the infection by 2030. He was speaking at the inauguration of World AIDS Day at JK Grounds, organised jointly by the Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society under the Department of Health and Family Welfare.

"United efforts are key to eliminating HIV/AIDS," Rao said. The first HIV case was detected globally in 1981, in India in 1986, and in Karnataka in 1987. Awareness campaigns, preventive measures, and NGO involvement have reduced prevalence significantly. With ART treatments, HIV-positive individuals now lead normal lives, dispelling early misconceptions about the disease.

HIV spreads through unprotected sexual contact, blood transfusions, mother-to-child transmission, needle sharing, and organ transplants, but not via casual contact such as hugging, handshakes, or sharing food.

Rao said 1,16,200 HIV-infected people have died in the state since 2004 without timely treatment. State AIDS Prevention Society Director Padma Basavanthappa said the Karnataka has 442 standalone ICTC centres, 94 ART centres, and 290 sub-centres in government and private hospitals. —*Salar News*

SEEKING BETTER LIVES



Anganwadi workers protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Monday, demanding the withdrawal of the Labour Power-2025 scheme and action on their other pending demands ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

SON BLAMES KOCHI HOSPITAL

Missing City man found dead on HMT premises

KOCHI, 1 DEC

The son of a Bengaluru resident, whose suspected body was found in a forested area near the HMT premises here, alleged on Monday that his father's death was due to the negligence of the Ernakulam Government Medical College authorities.

Santon said that Suraj Lama, 59, who suffered from memory loss, would not have died had they not discharged him.

Lama, who ran a restaurant in Kuwait, developed memory impairment after methanol poisoning and was deported in October.

He arrived at the Kochi airport on 5 October and was admitted to Ernakulam Medical College. However, he went missing after being discharged from the hospital on 10 October.

Santon, who reached Kochi and searched for his father, later filed a habeas corpus petition in the Kerala High Court, which directed the police to find the missing man.

Police officials said CCTV footage showed Lama was last seen near the HMT area, and a search led to the recovery of a decomposed body.

The clothing matched what Lama was last seen wearing, they said.

"I have a medical certificate from the Kuwait government stating that my father is mentally challenged.

How can the hospital say he requested discharge?" he asked. —*PTI*

HOTELIERS MOVE HC OVER PERIODS LEAVE ORDER

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

The Bangalore Hotels Association (BHA) has moved the Karnataka High Court against the state government's directive mandating monthly menstrual leave for women employees.

The association members argued the State itself does not offer such leave and that none of the cited labour laws empower the government to impose it.

The Labour Department's 12 November notification requires establishments under five labour Acts to grant one day of menstrual leave a month.

The BHA members called the order discriminatory and said leave policy lies with individual organisations. —*PTI*

FEST TO BEGIN ON 16 JAN

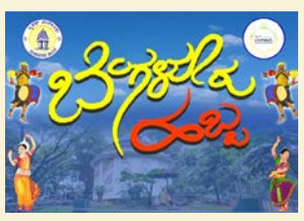
Get set for 3rd edition of Bengaluru Habba

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

- City platform UnboxingBLR on Monday unveiled three major initiatives spanning Bengaluru's cultural, civic, and innovation sectors.

City platform UnboxingBLR on Monday unveiled three major initiatives spanning Bengaluru's cultural, civic, and innovation sectors. The announcements include the third edition of the BLR Hubba 2026 cultural festival, a scaled-up Namma Bengaluru Challenge (NBC) startup accelerator, and the formal launch of India's first Startup and Tech Museum.

The third edition of BLR Hubba, scheduled for 16–25 January, 2026, aims to position the City on the global cultural map and grow into one of India's largest city festivals by 2030. The festival



will feature more than 250 performances across over 12 genres, including international acts from Japan and Malaysia and guitarist Marty Friedman. Events will be staged at more than 20 venues, with 80 per cent of programming newly curated.

The Namma Bengaluru Challenge returns with a focus on climate action under the tagline "Hot Problems, Cool Solutions." In partnership with WTFund and Social Alpha, and supported by the Karnataka government and Greater Bengaluru Authority, the grant pool has increased to Rs 25 lakh for each of five winners. After over 600 registrations, 10 shortlisted startups will pitch solutions addressing air pollution, construction waste, water, and sanitation issues on 24 January, 2026.

The Startup and Tech Museum, housed in a repurposed factory shed at the NGEF campus alongside the government-led deep-tech incubator Innoverse, will chronicle India's and Bengaluru's tech evolution. The immersive museum aims to educate and inspire visitors of all ages, showcasing the city's innovation ecosystem as a global hub. —*PTI*

SP MP blames 'useless cops' for City's traffic mess

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

City's traffic woes have come under fresh scrutiny as Samajwadi Party MP Rajeev Rai criticised the authorities, calling the city's roads "the most notorious" and citing "worst traffic management." Rai, visiting the city on Sunday, tagged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on X, saying he was stuck for an hour on Rajkumar Samadhi Road and feared missing his flight.

In his post on 30 November, Rai wrote: "I'm sorry, but you have the worst traffic management, and the most irresponsible, useless traffic police. They don't even pick up phone calls, here is the screenshot of my attempt to speak to them; none of them picked up my call." He added: "For the last one hour, we were stuck at the same place… Not a single policeman was seen around. These inefficient officers are enough to spoil the name and charm of this beautiful city."

Responding to the criticism, Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, who oversees Bengaluru development, said he would meet Rai in Delhi to show him the city's traffic situation in the national capital. "Okay. Let me meet him in Delhi and show him what traffic is like in Delhi. I will also tag him," Shivakumar told reporters. —*PTI*

LS passes Manipur GST Bill amid Oppn protest

Meanwhile, Opposition members went to the Well shouting slogans and protesting over SIR

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Monday amid unrelenting protests by opposition parties demanding a debate on the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

Amid the uproar, a bill to implement amendments to the GST law in Manipur was passed after a brief discussion.

The Bill was introduced earlier in the day by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to replace an ordinance on the issue. The state is under President's rule, hence Parliament is using its powers to pass the legislation.

Before being adjourned for the day around 2.20pm, the House saw two earlier adjournments during the Question Hour in the morning and later in the afternoon.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks during the first day of the Winter Session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

The first day of the Winter session, which will have 15 sittings, saw frequent disruptions.

Several Opposition members trooped into the Well shouting slogans and protesting over SIR, as they have been demanding a debate on the issue.

During the 12 minutes of the Zero Hour, Sitharaman introduced three bills besides tabling supplementary demands for grants for 2025-2026.

Two bills to levy excise duty on tobacco and tobacco products, as well as a new cess on the manufacture of pan masala, were introduced.

They are the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025.

The Election Commission had announced SIR in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Among these, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal will go to polls in 2026. *—PTI*

GOVT SEEKS LS NOD FOR ₹41,455 CR NET EXTRA SPENDING IN FY26

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The government on Monday sought Parliament's nod for net additional spending of Rs 41,455 crore in the current fiscal, of which over Rs 27,000 crore expenditure is towards fertiliser and petroleum subsidies.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2025-26 in the Lok Sabha, which seeks approval for a gross additional expenditure of Rs 1.32 lakh crore.

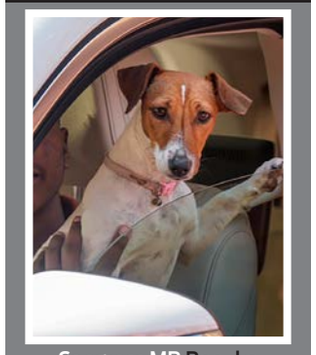
This includes a net cash outgo of Rs 41,455.39 crore and gross additional expenditure, matched by savings of the Ministries/Departments, of Rs 90,812 crore.

As per the Supplementary, approval of Parliament is being sought for spending Rs 18,525 crore on fertiliser and related subsidies, and about Rs 9,500 crore to the Petroleum Ministry towards LPG subsidy.

An additional Rs 1,304 crore has been earmarked for additional expenditure by the Department of Higher Education, and Rs 225 crore by the Commerce Ministry.

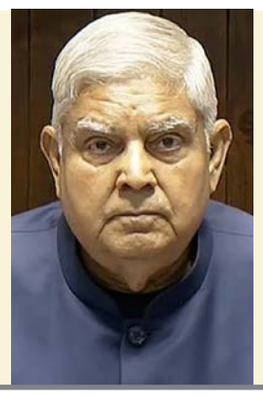
Approval is being sought for additional spending of about Rs 1,200 crore by the Ministry of External Affairs, and about Rs 2,500 crore by the Home Ministry. *—PTI*

'THOSE INSIDE PARL BITE, NOT DOGS'


Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury arrived in Parliament with her rescued stray dog in the car, triggering a row and prompting some BJP members to accuse her of indulging in drama. Earlier in the day she picked up a stray and was taking it to a veterinarian. When asked about bringing the dog to the Parliament, she said, "Animals don't have a voice. It (dog) was in the car, so what is their problem? It is so small, does it look like it will bite? Those sitting inside Parliament bite, not dogs."

Did Modi just take a dig at Jagdeep Dhankhar?

Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** praised newly appointed Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan, highlighting his rise from a modest, farmer-background family to the Upper House's helm and lauding his dedication to social service. "Often, people in high office get bound by protocol. But he has always risen above constraints," Modi said, in what observers saw as a veiled dig at former vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar, whose sudden resignation last year reportedly left him out of the PM's "good books". *—PTI*



Kharge mentions Dhankhar, Nadda prescribes doc visit

Parliament saw a verbal sparring match on Monday as Leader of Opposition **Mallikarjun Kharge** mentioned former vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar's "unexpected and sudden exit," prompting a sharp reaction from the treasury benches. Leader of the House JP Nadda urged restraint, calling it a "pious occasion" and reminded Kharge of the two no-confidence motions against Dhankhar. Nadda added with a hint of sarcasm that the opposition could "express their pain and suffering to a doctor". *—PTI*

SC to govt: Permit entry of pregnant B'deshi women

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The Supreme Court of India has asked the Centre to consider permitting a pregnant woman and her child, who were deported to Bangladesh earlier this year, to re-enter India on humanitarian grounds, while remaining under surveillance. Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made the request while hearing a plea challenging the Centre's deportation order. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta requested two days to seek instructions, stating, "We understand the court is asking us to consider the case on humanitarian ground." Senior advocate Sajay Hegde, representing the woman's father, Bhodu Sheikh, argued that the deportation was illegal, asserting, "They are Indian citizens." He further emphasised the need for the woman's husband to accompany her. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

18th Bihar Assembly begins with new members

PATNA, 1 DEC

The 18th Bihar Legislative Assembly commenced on Monday with newly elected members taking the oath of office. Pro-tem Speaker Narendra Narayan Yadav administered the oath, allowing members to swear in Hindi, English, Urdu, Sanskrit, or Maithili. Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha were the first ministers to take the oath, followed by veteran BJP leader Prem Kumar, who filed his nomination for the post of Assembly Speaker. The election is scheduled for Tuesday, with Prem Kumar expected to be elected unopposed as the Mahagathbandhan has not fielded a candidate. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, tipped to retain the Leader of Opposition post, received a warm hug from minister Ram Kripal Yadav, who had joined the BJP 11 years ago. Several MLAs, including Anand Shankar Prasad, popular singer & youngest MLA Maithili Thakur, took oaths in Maithili, while others swore in Urdu, Sanskrit, or English. The House was adjourned for the day, with remaining members to be sworn in after the Speaker election. The five-day session will include the Governor's address, budget discussions, and the passage of the appropriation bill. *—PTI*

BLO protest outside WB CEO's office

KOLKATA, 1 DEC

A section of BLOs, engaged in the SIR process in West Bengal, held a massive protest outside the CEO's office here on Monday over alleged excessive workload during the ongoing enumeration exercise, prompting the authorities to increase police deployment at the demonstration site.

What began as a routine sit-in by the BLO Adhikar Raksha Committee became a massive protest as senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari and party MLAs came to meet Election Commission officials in the afternoon, with the demonstrators raising anti-BJP slogans and trying to breach barricades erected by the police.

The narrow stretch outside the CEO's office in central Kolkata erupted with slogans -- "go back" from BLO members, "shame" from BJP supporters -- leading to chaos at the entrance.

Adhikari accused the Trinamool Congress (TMC) of orchestrating the protests to disrupt the electoral process, claiming, "The TMC wants this SIR to stop immediately, so that it can protect its vote bank comprising of infiltrators."

A man shows a black cloth in protest against the Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly Suvendu Adhikari, in Kolkata **PHOTO: PTI**

In separate comments, TMC's Abhishek Banerjee challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks that opposition accountability calls were merely "drama," stating, "If raising people's voice is drama, then the people will give them a reply in the next election." He lambasted the electoral revision process, alleging it had resulted in approximately 40 deaths.

Amidst this backdrop, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee plans to intensify her anti-SIR campaign with rallies to reclaim the narrative ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls, targeting areas with significant migrant and minority populations as fears grow over identity and citizenship scrutiny.

Additionally, the West Bengal government on Monday recommended retired Justice Rabindranath Samanta as the state's new Lokayukta at an annual sitting chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a meeting defined as much by its constitutional formality as by the conspicuous absence of Adhikari. *—PTI*

UP BLO makes video before killing himself

MORADABAD, 1 DEC

Sarvesh Singh, a Moradabad BLO, died by suicide, leaving a note citing sleeplessness, target pressure, and fear of losing his job. His wife said he slept only two to three hours nightly and struggled with digital form uploads. In Bijnor, 56-year-old BLO Shobha Rani collapsed and died of a heart attack while completing SIR forms, despite illness and diabetes. Officials denied any direct link between the deaths and workload, offering support to families. Five other BLOs have died during SIR duties in Uttar Pradesh this month. *—Agencies*

Security officials during a raid, in Pulwama, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

White-collar terror: NIA raids 8 places in J&K

SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday conducted raids at eight locations across Pulwama, Shopian, and Kulgam in Jammu and Kashmir in connection with a "white-collar" terror module linked to a car blast near Red Fort in Delhi.

Officials said searches included the residence of Moulvi Irfan Ahmad Wagay in Shopian, identified as the mastermind behind the radicalisation and recruitment for the module.

Wagay, arrested by police in October, was taken into NIA custody last month after the agency assumed control of the investigation into the blast that killed 15 and injured several others.

Raids were also carried out in Koil, Chandgam, Malangpora, and Samboora areas of Pulwama, linked to suspects in the case.

AL FALAH FOUNDER

Separately, a Delhi court on Monday sent Al Falah University founder Jawad Ahmed Siddiqui to 14-day judicial custody in a terror-linked money laundering case. *—PTI*

Masala Bond case: ED issues notice to Vijayan, ex-minister

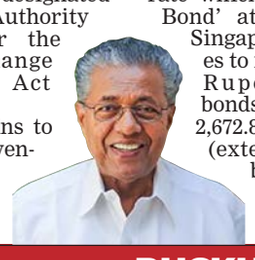
NEW DELHI/T'PURAM, 1 DEC

The Enforcement Directorate has issued a Rs 467 crore FEMA contravention show cause notice to Kerala Chief Minister **Pinarayi Vijayan**, former finance minister Thomas Issac, and the CM's chief principal secretary KM Abraham in the KIIFB Masala Bond case, officials said on Monday.

The notice was issued on 12 November by the designated ED Adjudicating Authority established under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), they said.

The notice pertains to the alleged contravention of FEMA provisions and the RBI master direction by the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) and its authorities, amounting to Rs 466.91 crore, they said. The notices have been issued to Vijayan, 80, in his capacity as KIIFB chairman, former Kerala finance minister Issac, as the board's vice chairman, and Abraham, in his role as the KIIFB CEO, in addition to the institution itself.

The KIIFB is a body corporate which floated a 'Masala Bond' at the London and Singapore stock exchanges to raise funds through Rupee-denominated bonds to the tune of Rs 2,672.80 crore under ECB (external commercial borrowing) in 2019, ED said. *—PTI*



After Rajouri, VPN suspended in Poonch

JAMMU, 30 NOV

The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch on Sunday ordered suspension of all virtual private network services in the border district for two months, citing their potential misuse for unlawful activities.

Poonch became the second border district in the Jammu region after Rajouri, where virtual private network (VPN) services have been suspended in the past two days.

Poonch District Magistrate Ashok Kumar Sharma ordered the suspension of VPNs under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) with immediate effect.

"The SSP informed that there has been an unprecedented high usage of VPNs in the past few days at different locations of the district by suspicious internet users," Sharma said in the order.

What is VPN

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is like a secret tunnel for the internet. When you use a VPN, your device first connects to a special server. *—PTI*

Sengottaiyan joined TVK on Shah's advice: Udhayanidhi

ERODE, 1 DEC

Tamil Nadu's political rivalry intensified on Sunday as Deputy Chief Minister **Udhayanidhi Stalin** accused expelled AIADMK leader K A Sengottaiyan of joining Vijay's TVK on the "advice" of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Addressing the Pudhiya Dravida Kazhagam's State Conference, he alleged that AIADMK leaders, including Edappadi K Palaniswami, routinely sought approval from Shah and had "abandoned" Dravidian principles. Udhayanidhi claimed a senior former AIADMK minister from Erode met Shah before switching to TVK, adding that many leaders now function under BJP influence.

Palaniswami cited the former MLA's boycotts of key events and alleged he had undermined the AIADMK for years. *—PTI*

M'rashtra local polls set for 2 Dec

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

Maharashtra is gearing up for local body elections on December 2, with voting scheduled for 242 municipal councils and 46 nagar panchayats. This marks the first phase of a three-tier election process mandated by the Supreme Court.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis criticised State Election Commission's (SEC) postponement of elections, labelling it "unfair" to candidates who completed nomination processes.

Amidst coalition tensions, Fadnavis remarked, "I support everyone who behaves well," reflecting on the ongoing conflict between BJP's Nitesh Rane and Shiv Sena's Nilesh Rane. *—PTI*

RUCKUS IN JAMMU

Hindu body wants Muslims out of college

JAMMU, 1 DEC

The Yuva Rajput Sabha on Monday protested and demanded that Muslim students be shifted from the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence and Hindus get reservations.

The protest followed the selection of 42 Muslims, mostly from Kashmir, one Sikh and seven Hindu candidates through the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) against the sanctioned 50 MBBS seats for the 2025–26 academic session. The medical college, built on 34 acres of land owned by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, was granted permission by the National Medical Commission on 8 September to commence admissions for the session.

PHOTO: PTI

Activists, led by Yuva Rajput Sabha leader Mandeep Singh, staged a demonstration at the Tawi bridge, alleging that the admission was part of a "conspiracy" against Jammu and the minority Hindu community there through, what they termed, flawed legislative bylaws. Protesters raised slogans against the government, the Lieutenant Governor's administration, accusing them of denying Hindus reservation the pattern of Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Islamic University, & Mahant Bijender Singh institutions, which they claimed provide community-based reservations. *—PTI*

Kerala activist arrested for revealing rape survivor name

T'PURAM, 1 DEC

Rahul Easwar, arrested for allegedly insulting the modesty of a woman who filed a rape complaint against MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, has been remanded to 14 days' judicial custody by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court.

The court deemed the allegations "serious in nature," expressing concern that granting bail at this stage could mislead the public. Easwar has been moved to Poojappura district jail. He claimed, "The police lied before the court," and announced plans to go on a hunger strike while in custody. During an earlier incident, police had detained him to recover a laptop allegedly used to edit and disseminate content targeting the victim. He alleged that police pressured him to post derogatory content about Mamkootathil.

The cyber police arrested Easwar and four others, including Congress leader Sandeep Warrier, for executing a cyber attack against the complainant, who is also alleging rape and forced termination of pregnancy. Following her complaint, the police have intensified actions against the accused. *—Agencies*

This is freedom struggle for men and this is against the Arnesh Kumar verdict. Police is claiming that they have served me notice but they have not served me any notice - Rahul Easwar, Activist

Mumbai chokes, civic body says all OK

BMC rules out GRAP-4 measures but intensifies monitoring across construction hotspots

NEW DELHI, 16 OCT

Mumbai continues to choke under a dense blanket of smog, with the city's air quality remaining in the 'poor' to 'very poor' categories across several monitoring stations, raising health concerns for millions.

Mornings and late evenings saw a visible haze hanging over major arterial roads, with residents reporting eye irritation and breathing discomfort.

Amid growing public anxiety, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) claimed that air quality has "improved" since 26 November due to a combination of pollution-control measures and better wind speeds. It also clarified that the Graded Response Action Plan Stage-4 (GRAP-4), the strictest set of restrictions meant for severe air quality, is not applicable to Mumbai "as of now", though monitoring has been intensified.

Municipal commissioner Bhushan Gagrani has directed officials to continue strict action against private construction sites and government or non-government projects flouting the civic body's 28-point dust-mitigation norms.

According to the BMC,

- Civic chief Gagrani has directed officials to continue strict action against private construction sites and government or other projects flouting the 28-pt dust-mitigation norms

enforcement measures such as notices to errant construction projects, misting, water sprinkling, road-washing, awareness campaigns and the shift by bakeries and crematoria to cleaner fuels have contributed to a marginal dip in pollution levels over the past 48 hours.

The civic body said wind speeds, earlier stagnant at 3–4kmph with high humidity, have increased to 10–18kmph, helping disperse trapped pollutants.

The civic body has deployed 94 ward-level flying squads to inspect construction, road and metro project stretches, issuing stop-work notices where violations are detected. Teams are also checking sensor-based AQI monitoring devices at major sites.

Mumbai's GRAP-4 rules are primarily applicable to construction-linked activities and small-scale industrial units. *—PTI*

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has imposed a range of emergency measures aimed at curbing further pollution **PHOTO: PTI**

Hoax bomb threat prompts checks at Kerala CM's home

T'PURAM, 1 DEC

Security checks were conducted at the official residence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and a private bank in Palayam following an email threat claiming bombs were placed at both locations. Police initiated the search at the CM's Cliff House after his private secretary received the alarming message. A dog squad and bomb detection team were deployed, but the threat was later confirmed as a hoax. Authorities noted that similar threats have occurred previously, with emails linking them to political events in Tamil Nadu. A case has been registered, and an investigation is ongoing. Officials stated the emails, forwarded via dark web applications, complicate tracing the individuals behind crime. *—PTI*

CM Vijayan calls for collaborative effort against HIV/Aids

T'PURAM, 1 DEC

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan emphasised the importance of collective action to combat the spread of HIV, revealing that the virus is under control in 99.8 per cent of those infected in the state. In his Facebook post for "World AIDS Day," he noted that 83 per cent of the estimated HIV-positive population have been identified and over 95 per cent are accessing Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART). While Kerala's HIV prevalence stands at 0.07 per cent, the 4,477 new infections reported in the past three years raise concerns. Vijayan called for continued efforts to eliminate discrimination and enhance treatment: "Let this World AIDS Day strengthen our collective efforts." *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Actress Samantha ties the knot with Raj Nidimoru

COIMBATORE, 1 DEC

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has married filmmaker Raj Nidimoru in an intimate ceremony at the Isha Yoga Centre in Coimbatore. The couple exchanged vows at the Linga Bhairavi Temple, attended by around 30 close friends and family. Samantha shared stunning images from the day on Instagram, captioning them with the wedding date. Dressed in a red saree, she looked radiant alongside Raj in a white kurta and cream bandhgala. They performed the Bhuta Shuddhi Vivaha ceremony, invoking spiritual alignment for their union. Speculation about their relationship had been rife, with both having been linked romantically over the past year. Previously, Samantha was married to actor Naga Chaitanya, who later married Sobhita Dhulipala. *—Agencies*

Mercedes crash: Our only breadwinner no more, say kin

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

A family in Chamoli, Uttarakhand, mourns their "only breadwinner" after Rohit, 23, a restaurant chef, was killed by a speeding Mercedes G63 in Vasant Kunj, south-west Delhi, on Sunday. Rohit worked at Ambience Mall, earning about Rs 15,000 monthly, and had been supporting his parents and siblings since age 20 while saving to open his own restaurant. He and two colleagues were waiting for transport to their rented accommodation in Munirka after work when the SUV allegedly hit them near Nelson Mandela Marg. "He was the only one earning. Our whole family depended on him," said his uncle Balwant Singh. Police said Rohit's body will be handed over after post-mortem. The two injured, Kapil and Lalit, are being treated, with Kapil in ICU. *—PTI*

READY FOR AIRLIFT

Indian nationals stranded in cyclone-hit Sri Lanka being evacuated by the Indian Air Force **PHOTO: PTI**

IAF rescues 300+ Indians from Ditwah-hit Sri Lanka

T'PURAM, 1 DEC

The Indian Air Force evacuated over 300 Indian nationals stranded in Sri Lanka after Cyclone Ditwah and brought them to Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday evening.

An IAF IL-76 and a C-130J, which had earlier delivered rescue material and NDRF teams to Colombo, were deployed for the airlift under Operation Sagar Bandhu, the ongoing Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief mission supporting Sri Lanka after recent calamities.

A Defence spokesperson said IAF helicopters also conducted multiple sorties to extract Sri Lankan Army personnel and civilians from landslide-hit Kotmale in the central province, an area cut off by road.

Fifty-seven soldiers were moved from Diyathalawa Army Camp and Colombo, while 55 civilians, including Indians, foreign nationals and Sri Lankan survivors, were guided by Garud Commandos to landing zones and airlifted to Colombo. The two helicopters have completed more than a dozen missions.

In a separate maritime incident linked to turbulent weather, 13 Bangladeshi fishermen who drifted into Indian territorial waters were traced off the Srikakulam coast in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. Police said the group, all from Bhola district, had ventured out on 10 November but were pushed off course after their boat's engine failed. Authorities confirmed the vessel had entered Indian Zone without permission. Bangladesh have been informed. *—PTI*

People wade through waterlogged road amid heavy rainfall in the wake of Cyclone Ditwah, in Chennai, on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Cyclone Ditwah remnants drench TN, Andhra

CHENNAI/AMARAVATI, 1 DEC

Parts of Tamil Nadu, including Chennai, Thiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, and Ranipet, continued to receive moderate rainfall on Monday as the remnants of Cyclone Ditwah lingered near the Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coasts. The system, which has weakened into a deep depression, is expected to remain stationary for 24 hours before gradually weakening further, the IMD said.

Continuous downpours caused waterlogging in many areas and the cancellation of ten flights from Chennai to Port Blair. CM MK Stalin held a review with district collectors, focusing on standing crop damage and relief measures. The Greater Chennai Corporation has kept 103 boats on standby, deployed 90 disaster response personnel, and stocked essential supplies including milk powder, rice, dal, and palm oil. Nearly 1.16 lakh people were provided food over two days. Rameswaram's Thangachimadam remains marooned, with around 200 habitations affected. Ennore recorded a maximum 129.9 mm rainfall, while the city averaged 68.26mm. Several schools declared half-day holidays, and traffic faced disruptions due to fallen trees and waterlogging.

In Andhra Pradesh, the remnants of Ditwah are expected to trigger heavy rains and squally winds up to 60kmph in coastal districts, including Nellore, Tirupati, and Prakasam.

Fishermen have been advised against venturing into the sea, and residents and farmers are urged to remain vigilant. *—PTI*

SC refuses extension for uploading Waqf property records on UMEED

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday declined to extend the deadline for mandatory registration of all Waqf properties, including 'Waqf by User', on the UMEED portal.

A Bench including Justice Dipankar Datta said applicants must approach the respective Waqf tribunals before the six-month period ends. "Our attention has been drawn to the proviso to Section 3B. Since the remedy before the tribunal is available, we dispose of all the applications by granting liberty to approach the tribunal by the last date of the six-month period," the Bench said.

The petitions, filed by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi and others, sought additional time for uploading property details, arguing the deadline was too restrictive. A lawyer informed the court that the six-month window was nearing its end.

In an interim order on 15 September, the court stayed a few provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, including the clause restricting creation of Waqf to those practising Islam for five years, but declined to suspend the entire law. It also held that removal of the 'Waqf by User' clause was not arbitrary. UMEED aims to create a geo-tagged digital inventory of all waqf properties nationwide. *—PTI*

Minister S Jaishankar addresses 'Biological Weapons Convention, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Jaishankar seeks framework on bioweapons

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

India on Monday urged the global community to establish a robust framework to prevent the misuse of biological weapons amid rising security risks.

At an event marking 50 years of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar warned that bioterrorism by non-state actors is an immediate threat.

"Misuse of biological weapons is no longer a distant possibility," he said.

Jaishankar noted that the BWC still lacks key institutional mechanisms, including a compliance system, a permanent technical body and tools to monitor emerging scientific developments.

India has long pushed for stronger verification measures and deeper international cooperation.

He stressed that scientific and technological advances must be regularly reviewed to ensure governance keeps pace. *—PTI*

Assam CM defends ST status report amid protests

GUWAHATI, 1 DEC

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the Group of Ministers' report on granting Scheduled Tribe status to six communities contains nothing that could "offend" any section, asserting that protesters had not read it properly. The report, covering the ST demands of Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes, was tabled in the assembly on Saturday.

Sarma said the recommendations ensure all communities "move forward" and that "no injustice" has been done. Referring to Bodoland University students vandalising property during a protest hours before the report was tabled, he said the demonstration occurred "without seeing the document".

The CM added that confusion had arisen because "some people commented without reading", and GoM members will meet the Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations of Assam to explain the report.

The report proposes a three-tier ST classification, including a new 'ST (Valley)' category, while assuring that current tribal reservations will not be diluted.

Parliament must give final approv- al." *—PTI*

HYDERABAD SCHOOL HELPER ASSAULTS 4-YEAR-OLD, BANGS HER HEAD

HYDERABAD, 1 DEC

A disturbing incident in Hyderabad has renewed questions about safety inside private schools after a four-year-old nursery student was allegedly assaulted by a female attendant.

The attack, which occurred on Saturday after school hours, came to light when a neighbour's camera captured the staffer violently handling the child inside the campus washroom area. The video, widely circulated online, shows the woman repeatedly hitting the girl, pushing her to the ground, stomping on her, and attempting to strangle her as the child tries to stand and escape the blows.

Police identified the accused as Lakshmi, a school helper who allegedly had a strained relationship with the child's mother, a bus conductor at the same school. Investigators said Lakshmi was insecure about losing her job to the younger employee, and this workplace tension may have escalated into the assault. The child's mother had briefly stepped out to drop students when the incident took place.

According to officials, the minor was rushed to hospital with injuries consistent with severe physical assault and a high fever.

No similar complaints have been reported by other parents, suggesting the attack may have been an isolated act. Following a complaint from the family, police filed a criminal case and detained Lakshmi. Authorities said further action will be taken once all evidence is reviewed. *—Agencies*

Insects gnaw body at Jhansi mortuary, three pulled up

JHANSI, 1 DEC

Authorities in Jhansi have ordered action against three mortuary staffers after the family of a 26-year-old woman alleged her body was found gnawed by insects at the medical college mortuary.

Officials said Kranti Devi, a resident of Sarvo village in the Gurusarai area, allegedly consumed poison on 28 November after a quarrel with her husband while staying at her parental home. She died during treatment at the medical college.

Her brother, Saksham Patel, said he had paid to keep the body in the mortuary's deep freezer on Saturday, but when he returned the next day he found insects had partially eaten her eye and ear. Chief

- Kranti Devi, who consumed poison, died during treatment at the medical college. Her brother said he had paid to keep the body in the deep freezer

Medical Superintendent Dr Sachin Mahour, who reached the mortuary following the commotion, confirmed bite marks near the woman's eyes and ears and assured the family of a probe.

One employee has been terminated, another suspended and a third issued a show-cause notice. Officials said a detailed inquiry is underway to ensure proper mortuary maintenance. *—PTI*

Stalin orders Rs 3L relief for TN bus accident victims

CHENNAI, 1 DEC

CM MK Stalin expressed deep shock over the bus accident near Tirupattur in Sivaganga district, which claimed 11 lives. Stalin also announced a solatium from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund. Families of the deceased will receive Rs 3 lakh each, while those who suffered severe injuries will be given Rs 1 lakh each. Individuals with minor injuries will be given Rs 50,000 each.

PM Modi announced that Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund would be given to the next of kin of the deceased, while the injured would receive Rs 50,000. *—Agencies*

COIMBATORE HORROR STORY

Man kills wife, posts selfie with corpse as Whatsapp status

COIMBATORE, 1 DEC

A 32-year-old man was arrested for hacking his estranged wife to death at a private women's hostel here and posting a selfie with her body as his WhatsApp status, renewing concerns over women's safety.

Police said the victim, 28, worked at a private firm in Coimbatore and had been living in the hostel following her separation from her husband, S Balamurugan. She hailed from Tharuvai in Tirunelveli district. The couple's two children were staying with her mother in Coimbatore after a dispute with Balamurugan.

S Balamurugan and B Sreepriya **PHOTO: X**

According to sources, accused arrived at the hostel on Sunday afternoon claiming he wanted to meet his wife. An argument broke out soon after, during which he allegedly attacked her with a sickle. Officials said he remained at the spot until the police arrived and took him into custody.

Police said the accused then took a selfie with his wife's body and uploaded it on WhatsApp, alleging she had betrayed him. The disturbing act shocked other hostel residents and drew condemnation from opposition leaders, who questioned the state's track record on women's safety and demanded stronger protective mechanisms. *—PTI*

FORGED IN DISCIPLINE, FUELED BY HONOR

An Indian military recruit celebrates with his family members after the Passing Out Parade of the 161 Infantry Battalion (Territorial Army), at the JAKLI Regimental Training Centre in Dhansal, on the outskirts of Jammu, on Monday
PHOTO: ANI

2025 is worst year for HIV infected as US stops funds

Launching its 2025 World AIDS Day report, Overcoming Disruption, Transforming the AIDS Response, UNAIDS said international assistance has sharply declined, with OECD projections showing external health funding could fall by 30-40 per cent in 2025 compared with 2023.

The impact has been immediate and severe, especially in low- and middle-income countries highly affected by HIV.

"The funding crisis has exposed the fragility of the progress we fought so hard to achieve," said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS, who was speaking in Geneva.

"Behind every data point in this report are people… babies missed for HIV screening, young women cut off from prevention support, and communities suddenly left without services and care. We cannot abandon them."

Youngsters light lamps around a 'red ribbon', the universal symbol of support for those with HIV, at the bank of River Ganga, as part of an awareness campaign on World AIDS Day, on Monday ***PHOTO: PTI***

WORLD AIDS DAY

PREVENTION SERVICES 'HIT HARDEST'

UNAIDS reports widespread disruption to HIV prevention, testing and community-led programmes.

Across 13 countries, the number of people newly initiated on treatment has fallen.

Stock-outs of HIV test kits and essential medicines have been reported in Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Distribution of preventive medicines plummeted — down 31 per cent in Uganda, 21 per cent in Viet Nam, and 64 per cent in Burundi.

450,000 women in sub-Saharan Africa lost access to "mother mentors," trusted community workers who link them to care.

Nigeria recorded a 55 per cent drop in condom distribution.

Before the crisis, adolescent girls and young women were already severely affected — 570 new HIV infections occur every day among young women aged 15-24. UNAIDS warns that dismantled prevention programmes leave them even more vulnerable.

Community-led organisations, the backbone of HIV outreach, are also under pressure. Over 60 per cent of women-led organisations say they have had to suspend essential services.

UNAIDS modelling now suggests that failure to restore prevention efforts could lead to an additional 3.3 million new HIV infections between 2025 and 2030.

RIGHTS REVERSALS DEEPENS RISK

The funding crisis is unfolding amid growing restrictions on civil society and a rise in punitive laws targeting marginalised groups most affected by HIV.

For the first time since UNAIDS began tracking such legislation, the number of countries criminalising same-sex relations and gender expression increased in 2025.

Across the globe, the count is 168 countries criminalise some aspect of sex work, 152 criminalise small-scale drug possession, 64 criminalise same-sex relations, 14 criminalise transgender people.

Restrictions on civil society, including onerous registration rules and limits on receiving international assistance, are further undermining access to services.

'PEOPLE ARE STILL IN NEED OF SERVICE'

Speaking from Harare, Dr. Byrone Chingombe, Technical Director at the Centre for Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Research (CeSHHAR), described the real-world impact of funding cuts in Zimbabwe.

"2025 has been a hard year," he said. "When funding stopped in January, service providers were laid off overnight. Medicines were on the shelves, but the people who deliver them were gone. That disrupted adherence, and more importantly, it disrupted trust."

CeSHHAR's HIV testing "case finding" rates have fallen by more than 50 per cent, a drop he says reflects loss of access, not reduced need. Community-led teams, already overstretched, are trying to fill the gap.

He highlighted two areas of hope: community resilience and new long-acting prevention technologies, including the injectable lenacapavir — recently fast-tracked for approval in Zimbabwe and now expected to reach the country in early 2026.

A CALL TO ACTION

UNAIDS is urging world leaders to reaffirm global solidarity and multilateralism, including commitments made at the recent G20 Leaders Summit in South Africa

Maintain and increase HIV funding, especially for countries most dependent on external assistance

Invest in innovation, including affordable long-acting prevention

Uphold human rights and empower communities, which remain central to successful HIV responses

"This is our moment to choose," said Executive Director of UNAIDS and an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Winnie Byanyima said. "We can allow these shocks to undo decades of hard-won gains, or we can unite behind the shared vision of ending AIDS. Millions of lives depend on the choices we make today." *—UN*

SALAR سالار

'Traffic, not stubble, behind Delhi's pollution'

Even with farm fires at a multi-year low, Delhi-NCR's winter air remains suffocating. For most of October and November, pollution levels hovered between 'very poor' and 'severe', fuelled by a rising "toxic cocktail" of PM2.5, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and carbon monoxide (CO) emitted mainly from vehicles and other local sources.

At least 22 air-quality monitoring stations in Delhi recorded carbon monoxide (CO) levels above permissible limits on more than 30 of the 59 days assessed, with Dwarka Sector 8 logging the highest number of breaches at 55 days, followed by Jahangirpuri and Delhi University's North Campus, both at 50 days, according to a new analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

The analysis also highlights a troubling proliferation of pollution hotspots in the capital.

In 2018, only 13 locations were officially designated as hotspots. Now, several more locations routinely record pollution levels far higher than the city average.

Jahangirpuri emerged as Delhi's most polluted hotspot, with an annual PM2.5 average of 119 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³), followed by Bawana and Wazirpur (113 µg/m³), Anand Vihar (111 µg/m³), and Mundka, Rohini, and Ashok Vihar (101–103 µg/m³).

Vivek Vihar, Alipur, Nehru Nagar, Siri Fort, Dwarka Sector 8 and Patparganj were some of the new hotspots flagged by CSE.

Smaller NCR towns also recorded more intense and longer smog episodes this year.

Bahadurgarh experienced the longest continuous smog event — lasting 10 days, from November 9 to 18 — indicating that the region increasingly behaves as a single airshed with uniformly high pollution levels.

CSE's assessment finds that early winter pollution has plateaued at unhealthy levels, driven mainly by local emissions, even as the contribution of stubble burning has dropped significantly.

The analysis — based on CPCB data — points to a "toxic cocktail" of PM2.5, nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and carbon monoxide (CO), pollutants closely linked to vehicles and combustion sources, that has heightened health risks this season.

Researchers found that PM2.5 levels rose and fell almost in tandem with NO_2 during peak traffic hours. Between 7-10am and 6-9pm, both pollutants spiked sharply as vehicular emissions accumulated under shallow winter boundary layers.

While NO_2 showed rapid, traffic-linked peaks, PM2.5 recorded broader, slower-moving spikes. CO levels also breached the eight-hour standard at several locations across the city.

"This synchronised pattern reinforces that particulate pollution spikes are being fuelled daily by traffic-related emissions of NO_2 and CO, especially under low-dispersion conditions," said Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director (research and advocacy), CSE.

"Yet, winter control efforts remain dominated by dust measures, with weak action on vehicles, industry, waste burning and solid fuels," she added.

The report notes that stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana was significantly subdued this year, partly because floods disrupted the crop cycle.

For most of the early winter period, farm fires contributed less than 5 per cent to Delhi's pollution, rising to 5–15 per cent on some days and peaking at 22 per cent on 12–13 November.

While the decline in stubble burning prevented extreme pollution spikes, it did little to improve daily air quality, the report said. PM2.5 remained the dominant pollutant on 34 days, followed by PM10 on 25 days, ozone on 13 days, and CO on two days.

Throughout November, the AQI remained in the 'very poor' to 'severe' range, underscoring the persistent impact of Delhi's local pollution sources — traffic, industry, waste burning, and domestic fuel use.

Although peak pollution levels this year were lower compared to the past three winters due to reduced firecrackers and farm-fire impact, average pollution levels showed almost no improvement.

PM2.5 levels for October–November were about 9 per cent lower than last year, but compared to the three-year baseline, no meaningful progress was observed.

Between 2018 and 2020, PM2.5 levels recorded a steady decline, partly due to the pandemic. Since 2021–22, however, annual averages have plateaued at elevated levels.

In 2024, the annual average rose sharply to 104.7 µg/m³, reversing earlier gains.

The report recommends a set of deep structural measures to tackle emissions across sectors — time-bound electrification targets, scrapping of older vehicles, expanded public transport and last-mile connectivity, and better walking and cycling infrastructure.

It also calls for parking caps, congestion taxes, cleaner industrial fuels, lower gas taxes, elimination of waste burning, improved waste segregation, and remediation of legacy dumps.

On Monday, Delhi's 3pm AQI stood at 303, placing it in the 'very poor' category, according to the CPCB's air quality bulletin. *—PTI*

Vehicles along Barapullah flyover on a smoggy winter morning in New Delhi on 27 November, as the capital's air quality stayed 'very poor' for the 14th straight day ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

As war wages, world's largest arms makers, revenue increases

Revenues from sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest weapons-producing companies worldwide rose by 5.9 per cent last year, with demand boosted by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and global and regional geopolitical tensions, according to a global report released on Monday.

The combined arms revenues of the three Indian companies in this list increased by 8.2 per cent to USD 7.5 billion on the back of domestic orders, says the report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The Sweden-based global think-tank, in a statement, also shared a weblink that carried the list of "top 100 arms-producing and military services companies" in the world in 2024.

The Indian firms which figure in it are -- Hindustan Aeronautics (at 44th spot), Bharat Electronics (58th), Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (91st).

"Revenues from sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest arms-producing companies rose by 5.9 per cent in 2024, reaching a record USD 679 billion, according to new data released today by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)," the statement said.

Global arms revenues rose sharply last year, as demand was "boosted by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, global and regional geopolitical tensions, and ever-higher military expenditure".

For the first time since 2018, all of the five largest arms companies increased their arms revenues, SIPRI reported.

The top five companies in the list in that order are -- Lockheed Martin Corp. (the US), RTX (the US), Northrop Grumman Corp. (the US), BAE Systems (the UK) and General Dynamics Corp. (the US).

"Although the bulk of the global rise was due to companies based in Europe and the United States, there were year-on-year increases in all of the world regions featured in the top 100. The only exception was Asia and Oceania, where issues within the Chinese arms industry drove down the regional total," it said.

In 2024, the combined arms revenues of US arms companies in the top 100 grew by 3.8 per cent to reach USD 334 billion, with 30 out of the 39 US companies in the ranking increasing their arms revenues. These included major arms producers such as Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, the statement said.

"However, widespread delays and budget overruns continue to plague development and production in key US-led programmes such as the F-35 combat aircraft, the Columbia-class submarine and the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Several of the USA's largest arms producers are affected by overruns, raising uncertainty about when major new weapon systems and upgrades to existing ones can be delivered and deployed," it added.

The surge in revenues and new orders prompted many arms companies to expand production lines, enlarge facilities, establish new subsidiaries or conduct acquisitions, the think-tank said.

"Last year global arms revenues reached the highest level ever recorded by SIPRI as producers capitalised on high demand," Lorenzo Scarazzato, Researcher with the SIPRI Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme, was quoted as saying in the statement.

"Although companies have been building their production capacity, they still face a range of challenges that could affect costs and delivery schedules," Scarazzato said.

Of the 26 arms companies in the top 100 based in Europe (excluding Russia), 23 recorded increasing arms revenues.

"Their aggregate arms revenues grew by 13 per cent to USD 151 billion. This increase was tied to demand stemming from the war in Ukraine and the perceived threat from Russia," it said.

Besides, two Russian arms companies in the list, Rostec and United Shipbuilding Corporation, increased their combined arms revenues by 23 per cent to USD 31.2 billion, despite international sanctions that led to a shortage of components. Domestic demand was enough to more than offset the revenues lost due to falling arms exports, SIPRI said.

For the first time, nine of the top 100 arms companies were based in the Middle East, with combined arms revenues of USD 31.0 billion. Arms revenues in the region grew by 14 per cent. The three Israeli arms companies in the ranking increased their combined arms revenues by 16 per cent to USD 16.2 billion, the statement said.

Notably, US company SpaceX appeared in the SIPRI top 100 for the first time, after its arms revenues more than doubled compared with 2023, to reach USD 1.8 billion, it said.

SIPRI said, in its statement, 'arms revenues' refer to revenues generated from the sales of military goods and services to military customers domestically and abroad. *—PTI*

3.8% in 2024, arms revenues of US arms companies in the top 100 grew by 3.8% to reach $334 billion, with 30 out of the 39 US firms in the ranking increasing their arms revenues

Aggregate arms revenues grew by 13 per cent to USD 151 billion, the increase is tied to demand stemming from the wars in Ukraine and Gaza as well as regional geopolitical tensions ***PHOTO: PTI***

Pope prays at tomb revered by Christians, Muslims

ANNAYA, 1 DEC

Pope Leo XIV arrived in Lebanon from Türkiye on 30 November. On 1 December, his first full day in the country, he prayed at the tomb of St. Charbel Makhlouf. Making him the first pope to visit the Lebanese saint, revered among Christians and Muslims alike. He opened the visit with a message of peace and religious coexistence in a conflict-torn region. Leo stressed peace and Christian-Muslim coexistence amid the Gaza conflict and Lebanon's worsening tensions, including divisions over Hezbollah's disarmament. Thousands of Lebanese braved steady rain to line his motorcade route into Annaya near Beirut. On 2 December, his final day in Lebanon, Pope Leo will visit the site of the 2020 Beirut Port explosion for a silent prayer. *—PTI*

3 militants killed as Pak foils attack on Army HQ

KARACHI, 1 DEC

Three militants of the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) were killed as security personnel foiled an attack on the headquarters of a paramilitary force in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, officials said on Monday. The incident took place on Sunday night in the Nokundi town of Chagai district when the militants attempted to storm the headquarters of Frontier Corps (FC) after a suicide bomber detonated himself at the main gate. "The FC Quick Response Force immediately retaliated and killed three terrorists who had managed to enter the headquarters," a spokesperson said. *—PTI*

Conservatives lead in Honduras after Trump's backing

HONDURAS, 1 DEC

In Honduras' presidential election, with results from about 34 per cent of polling places counted, conservative candidates Nasry Asfura and Salvador Nasralla are leading. Asfura, from the National Party, garnered 40.63 per cent of the votes, while Nasralla, from the Liberal Party, followed closely with 38.78 per cent . Rixi Moncada of the LIBRE party trailed with 19.59 per cent . Days before the election, US President Donald Trump endorsed Asfura, stating he would combat "narco-communists." Trump also announced a pardon for former President Juan Orlando Hernández, currently imprisoned for drug trafficking. *—PTI*

That's horrifying: James Cameron on AI generative actors

LOS ANGELES, 1 DEC

Oscar-winning filmmaker James Cameron called the idea of artificial intelligence (AI) replacing humans in films "horrifying". Cameron, known for acclaimed films such as "Titanic" and the "Avatar" franchise, said he loves working with the actors and doesn't want AI to take over. Generative AI can create characters and actor performance from scratch using only a text prompt. "I don't want a computer doing what I pride myself on being able to do with actors. I don't want to replace actors, I love working with actors," he told CBS Sunday Morning. The 'Avatar' director noted that the technology can make VFX cheaper. However, he worries that imaginative, big-budget sci-fi films are disappearing, stating, "A original project wouldn't be greenlit today." *—PTI*

Icy road conditions caused a massive 45-car pileup on Indiana's I-70 in US on Saturday; despite the crash, no major injuries were reported. The interstate reopened after a few hours

Flood victims wade through a submerged area of Colombo, Sri Lanka, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Death toll crosses 1,000 in devastating floods across Asia

Indonesia sees over 502 deaths, Lanka 335

COLOMBO, 1 DEC

- Sri Lanka's Opposition accused the government of ignoring meteorological warnings issued on 12 November

More than 1,000 people have been killed across Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Malaysia in less than a week as relentless rains triggered flooding and landslides, leaving vast areas submerged and tens of thousands displaced.

Indonesia has reported at least 502 deaths, Sri Lanka 335, Thailand 176, and Malaysia three. Authorities caution that the full toll is still unclear, with hundreds missing across the region.

In Indonesia, President Prabowo Subianto on Monday pledged to rebuild damaged infrastructure during a visit to flood-hit areas on Sumatra Island. As of Monday, 474 people were missing, and several regions remained inaccessible due to destroyed roads and downed communication lines. Nearly 290,700 people have been displaced in North Sumatra, West Sumatra and Aceh provinces, with aid being delivered by aircraft to isolated communities. Central Tapanuli and Sibolga have been particularly difficult to reach, prompting authorities to dispatch ships with relief supplies.

Reporters travelling through North Tapanuli described landslides "on every corner", with entire villages cut off. At one church shelter, soldiers continued searching for dozens of missing residents, while aid distribution scenes reflected deepening desperation. Around 20,000 emergency personnel have been deployed.

In Sri Lanka, authorities said 334 people had died and 370 remained missing, with more than 1 million people affected. Over 148,000 people are housed in temporary shelters, especially in Badulla, Colombo, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya districts.

Kandy has recorded the highest toll with 88 deaths and 150 missing, followed by Nuwara Eliya with 75 deaths and 62 missing. Mudslides have blocked access to several villages in Badulla, leaving residents short of food and clean water. A dramatic military rescue on Saturday saved 69 stranded passengers in Anuradhapura.

Sri Lanka's opposition accused the government of ignoring meteorological warnings issued on 12 November, arguing that gradual release of reservoir water could have mitigated the impact.

Meanwhile, Nepal has announced USD 200,000 in aid for Sri Lanka, expressing solidarity and confidence in the country's recovery efforts. *—PTI*

Hasina, niece get jail terms in land scam

DHAKA, 1 DEC

A Bangladesh court on Monday sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to five years of imprisonment and her niece, British parliamentarian Tulip Siddiq, to a two-year jail term in a land scam case.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka also handed down a seven-year jail term to Hasina's sister, Sheikh Rehana, in the corruption case filed against 17 people, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

The 14 other accused were jailed for five years.

The court also imposed a fine of Tk 1 lakh each on all 17 convicts, failing which they will have to serve an additional six months in jail.

This is the fourth verdict involving Hasina in graft cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Siddiq, a British Labour Party politician, is Rehana's daughter and is the Member of Parliament for Hampstead and Highgate since 2015.

The interim government issued an arrest warrant for Siddiq, 43, in April.

The ACC filed the land scam case on January 13 against 15 people, including Hasina, Rehana and Siddiq.

The ACC filed six cases between January 12 and 14 over irregularities in plot allocation in the Purbachal New Town project.

The ACC alleged that Hasina, in collusion with senior Rajuk officials, unlawfully secured six plots, each measuring 10 kathas (7,200 square feet), in the diplomatic zone of Sector 27 of the Purbachal New Town project for herself, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed Putul, sister Rehana, niece Siddique, and other relatives. *—PTI*

Ex-PM Khaleda Zia 'extremely unwell', put on ventilator

DHAKA, 1 DEC

Former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia is "extremely ill" and has been placed on ventilator, with local and international specialists overseeing her care, senior BNP leaders said on Monday. The 80-year-old BNP chairperson was admitted to a private hospital on 23 November with a chest infection affecting her heart and lungs. She was moved to the coronary care unit four days later as her condition worsened. BNP vice-chairman Ahmed Aazam Khan said she is "very critical". Zia, who suffers from multiple chronic health issues, returned from medical treatment in London in May. Her son Tarique Rahman lives in London, while her other son Arafat Rahman died in 2025. *—PTI*

AFTERMATH OF A TRAGEDY

A charred air conditioner sits in a shattered window frame, while smoke-stained yellow walls and debris mark the devastation after a small fire on 26 November escalated into an inferno that engulfed eight high-rises at Wang Fuk Court in Hong Kong's Tai Po. At least 146 people were killed and thousands left homeless. Donations for victims have reached USD 115 million, reflecting an outpouring of public sympathy even as questions mount over responsibility for the deadly blaze **PHOTO: HONG KONG POLICE HANDOUT**

JAPAN BATS FOR PRINCESS AIKO

Calls grow to change Japan's succession law

TOKYO, 1 DEC

Princess Aiko's soaring public popularity is fuelling fresh calls to revise Japan's male-only imperial succession law as the royal family continues to shrink. During a recent visit to Nagasaki with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, cheers for the princess overwhelmed those for her parents, underscoring her growing appeal as she turns 24 on Monday.

Aiko, the emperor's only child, is barred from the throne under the 1947 Imperial House Law, which permits only male-line heirs and strips female royals of their status if they marry commoners. With Naruhito's nephew Prince Hisahito, 19, the only eligible heir of the younger generation, experts warn the monarchy faces extinction unless the succession rules are changed.

Support for Aiko grew after her first solo overseas visit to Laos in November, following other public engagements in Nagasaki and Okinawa. Admirers, including atomic bombing survivor Setsuko Matsuo and longtime supporter Mari Maehira, say they hope to see her become monarch. Advocates are pressing lawmakers to act, with campaigners distributing leaflets, running YouTube channels and sending pro-Aiko comic books to parliamentarians. They argue a female monarch would also improve gender equality in Japan.

The Imperial Family now has just 16 members, down from 30 three decades ago. *—PTI*

Trump told Maduro to 'flee Venezuela'

WASHINGTON, 1 DEC

US President Donald Trump on Sunday confirmed he had spoken with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, declining to give details of the conversation. "I don't want to comment on it. The answer is yes," he told reporters aboard Air Force One, adding that it was simply "a phone call".

However, according to Miami Herald Trump's message to Maduro was: safe passage would be guaranteed for him, his wife Cilia Flores, and his son only if he agreed to resign right away.

The disclosure comes as Washington intensifies pressure on Caracas. On Saturday,

Trump declared Venezuelan airspace "closed in its entirety" without elaboration, prompting confusion in the capital. He later said: "Don't read anything into it."

The administration has been weighing options against what it claims is Maduro's involvement in drug trafficking, an allegation the Venezuelan leader denies. Reuters has reported that US options include an attempt to overthrow Maduro, alongside an expanded military presence in the Caribbean and months of strikes on suspected drug-smuggling vessels. Trump said he would review reports that a second strike killed survivors during a September operation, stressing he "would not have wanted such a strike". Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth maintains the strikes are lawful but "lethal".

In Washington, lawmakers from both parties said they support congressional reviews following reports that Hegseth verbally ordered all crew members to be killed during a 2 September attack. *—Agencies*

Ukraine peace talks on track, but more work remains: Rubio

HALLANDALE BEACH, 1 DEC

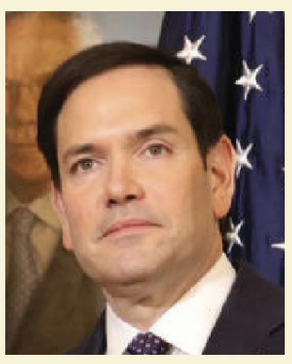
US and Ukrainian officials held four hours of talks on Sunday aimed at ending the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters afterwards that the session was productive, but the search for a peace deal remains.

The high-level negotiations in Florida came days before President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, visited Moscow to meet Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Rubio, Witkoff, and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, represented the American side in the talks, held at a sensitive time as Ukraine continues to resist Russian forces.

Zelenskyy meets Macron French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Paris on Monday, and called ongoing talks "a moment that could be a turning point" for the future of peace in Ukraine and security in Europe. *—PTI*



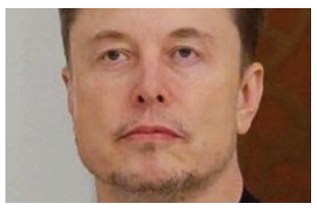
TALENT ACROSS BORDERS

US benefited from talented Indians: Musk backs H1B visas

NEW YORK, 1 DEC

The United States has been an "immense beneficiary" of Indian talent, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk has said, voicing strong support for the H1B visa programme and warning that shutting it down would be "very bad" for America. Musk made the remarks on investor Nikhil Kamath's podcast 'People by WTF', released on Sunday.

While acknowledging that some outsourcing companies had "gamed the system", Musk said the programme should not be scrapped. His comments come amid a major US crackdown on H1B abuse and after President Donald Trump imposed a one-time USD 1,00,000 fee on new visas under a recent Proclamation. Indian professionals form one of the



largest groups of H1B holders.

Asked whether the US had become increasingly anti-immigration, Musk said opinion was divided. He accused the Biden administration of allowing "massive" illegal immigration due to weak border controls, creating negative incentives. He added that the political left favoured open borders, while the right feared job losses to skilled foreign workers. Musk countered that "there's always a scarcity of talented people" and said his companies hire globally for the best talent and pay above average.

Musk also reflected on labour practices elsewhere, saying some firms hire cheaper foreign workers to cut costs, though this was not his approach.

In a separate part of the interview, Musk revealed that his partner Shivon Zilis is "half-Indian" and that one of their sons has the middle name "Sekhar", in tribute to Nobel-winning astrophysicist Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar. Zilis, adopted as a baby and raised in Canada, is a senior executive at Neuralink. She and Musk share four children.

Asked for advice to young Indian entrepreneurs, Musk urged them to "be value creators" and build useful products that contribute to society. *—PTI*

Australian police bust 'satanic' child sex abuse ring

MELBOURNE, 1 DEC

Four Sydney men have been charged over their alleged involvement in distributing child sexual abuse mate-rial linked to an international network, Australian police said on Monday. Detectives executed six search warrants across Waterloo, Ultimo and Malabar on 27 November as part of a New South Wales Police task force investigation into encrypted material featuring ritualistic and satanic themes.

Detective Supt Jayne Doherty said officers uncovered a Sydney-based group allegedly sharing abhorrent abuse content and discussing symbols and rituals. Police seized electronic devices containing thousands of videos involving victims from babies to 12-year-olds. The accused are Landon Germanotta-Mills, 26, Stuart Woods Riches, 39, Mark Andrew Sendecky, 42, and Benjamin Drysdale, 46. *—PTI*

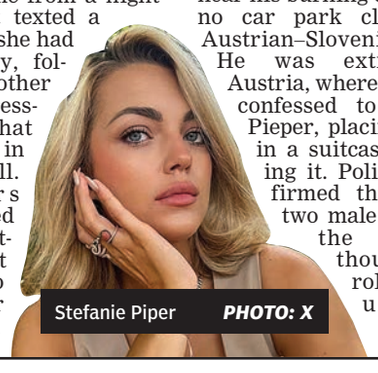
Ex-boyfriend kills, buries Austrian influencer in bag

VIENNA, 1 DEC

- The suspect was arrested in Slovenia after being found near his burning car in a casino car park.

Austrian beauty influencer Stefanie Pieper, 31, known for her makeup, fashion and singing content, was found murdered after allegedly being killed by her ex-boyfriend, Peter M, who is accused of placing her body in a suitcase and burying it in a Slovenian forest.

According to the Styrian State Police, Pieper was last seen on 23 November after returning home from a night out. She first texted a friend saying she had reached safely, followed by another message expressing fear that someone was in her stairwell. Neighbours later reported hearing a heated argument and claimed to have seen her ex-partner in the building around the same time. When relatives and colleagues were unable to reach her the next day, they filed a missing person report.



Stefanie Piper **PHOTO: X**

The suspect was arrested in Slovenia after being found near his burning car in a casino car park close to the Austrian–Slovenian border. He was extradited to Austria, where he allegedly confessed to strangling Pieper, placing her body in a suitcase and burying it. Police also confirmed the arrest of two male relatives of the accused, though their roles remain unclear. —PTI

QUOTE of THE DAY

"India is a major footwear exporter of the world, but to further boost our exports, the footwear business needs to be expanded even more

—DROUPADI MURMU
President

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee falls 8P, closes at 89.53 against USD

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

The rupee depreciated 8 paise and closed at 89.53 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, fuelled by strong demand for the American currency. Forex traders said the sustained weakness in the rupee is primarily attributable to the widening trade deficit, the delayed India-US trade deal, and limited RBI intervention. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 89.45, then lost ground and fell to a record low of 89.79 (provisional) against the US dollar in intraday trade, down 34 paise over its previous close. At the end of trade on Monday, the rupee settled at 89.53 (provisional) against the greenback, down eight paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee dropped nine paise to settle at 89.45 against the US dollar. In the near term, spot USD-INR has resistance at 89.95 and support at 89.30, Parmar added. —*PTI*

Govt revises coal, lignite exploration approval process

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The Indian Ministry of Coal has revised the approval process for exploration programmes and geological reports concerning coal and lignite blocks, aiming to bolster business efficiency and promote sustainable exploration. The updated mechanism no longer requires approval from a government panel established in 2022. A ministry statement noted, "The Ministry of Coal has reviewed the earlier methodology and simplified the mechanism for approval of exploration programs and Geological Reports (GRs) for coal and lignite blocks prepared by Notified Accredited Prospecting Agencies (APAs) accredited by QCI-NABET and peer-reviewed by another such APA." This reform reflects a commitment to enhancing transparency and encouraging private sector involvement, ensuring the sustainable development of India's coal resources while meeting the nation's growing energy demands. —*PTI*

Diesel demand rebounds 13.6% in November

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

India's diesel consumption hit a six-month high in November, driven by the festival season and a GST rate cut that boosted economic activity. Preliminary Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) data shows diesel sales rose 4.7 per cent year-on-year to 8.55 million tonnes, the strongest since May 2025. Demand had fallen for three consecutive months during the monsoon, when irrigation needs dropped and vehicular movement slowed, before recovering with receding rains and festive-season transport in October. Compared with 7.52 million tonnes in November 2023, diesel demand was up 13.61 per cent. In the first eight months of FY25, sales rose 2.76 per cent to 61.85 million tonnes. Petrol consumption grew 2.19 per cent to 3.5 million tonnes. —*PTI*

India's mfg sector hits 9-month low in Nov: PMI

PMI fell by 59.2% in October, marking slowest improvement

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

India's manufacturing sector activity has diminished to a nine-month low in November, primarily due to a softer rise in sales and production amid challenging market conditions, a monthly report indicated. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 56.6 in November from 59.2 in October, marking the slowest improvement in operating conditions since February.

"India's final November PMI confirmed that US tariffs caused the manufacturing expansion to slow," stated Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC. Although companies reported a favourable trend in international sales, especially to clients in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, the overall growth momentum saw a mild decline.

New export orders rose at the weakest pace in over a year, with the new export orders PMI dropping to a 13-month low *PHOTO: ANI*

New export orders rose at the weakest pace in over a year, with the new export orders PMI dropping to a 13-month low. Business confidence regarding future output also fell significantly, reflecting rising concerns about tariff impacts.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal expressed hope of reaching a trade deal framework with the US this year to benefit Indian exporters. He acknowledged that while the Bilateral Trade Agreement would take time, discussions are ongoing to address tariff challenges.

Despite the boost from goods and services tax cuts fading, manufacturers' hiring efforts adjusted to a slowdown in new order growth, with employment expanding at the slowest pace in 21 months. —*PTI*

LEVIES ON 'SIN GOODS'

Bills tabled for levies on tobacco, pan masala

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday moved two new bills in the Lok Sabha that look to repurpose levies on 'sin goods' such as tobacco, pan masala and related products ahead of the scheduled phaseout of the GST compensation cess levied on them.

The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill seeks to levy excise duty on tobacco and related products, while 'The Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025' would be applicable on manufacturing of pan masala and other goods that the government may notify.

The bills, introduced amid din in the Lok Sabha as Opposition members protested, demanding a discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, may be taken up for discussion in the House on Tuesday.

TMC member Saugata Ray opposed the introduction of the two bills, saying that tobacco is harmful, but the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill does not mention that. With regard to the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025, Ray said that since cess proceeds are not shared with states, he opposes the bill. —*PTI*

Mkts hit fresh all-time high before tumbling

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed marginally lower after hitting their fresh all-time highs on Monday due to profit-taking at higher levels and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex pared early gains and closed 64.77 points or 0.08 per cent lower at 85,641.90. During the day, the benchmark jumped 452.35 points or 0.52 per cent to hit a record intra-day high of 86,159.02.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 27.20 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 26,175.75. During the day, it climbed 122.85 points or 0.46 per cent to hit a lifetime high of 26,325.80.

Markets faced correction at higher levels as expectations of an RBI rate cut this week faded following better-than-expected Q2 GDP growth, an expert said.

A slower growth in GST collection and profit-taking at higher levels also dragged the key indices.

Stock markets had surged to their record highs in the morning session as investor sentiment turned positive after India's economy grew at a higher-than-expected 8.2 per cent in July-September - recording the fastest pace in six quarters.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Sun Pharma, Trent, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India and Bajaj Finserv were the major laggards.

However, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Maruti, Bharat Electronics, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.19 per cent and smallcap index ended flat marginally up by 0.05 per cent. —*PTI*

GST collection up by 0.7% at ₹1.70L cr

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections in November posted marginal monthly growth even as year-to-date performance remained robust.

According to provisional data released by the government, the total Gross GST revenue touched Rs 1,70,276 crore in November 2025, a 0.7 per cent increase over the Rs 1,69,016 crore collected in November 2024.

In October, in gross terms, the GST collections had rose 4.6 per cent to about 1.95 lakh crore compared to about 1.87 lakh crore in the same month last year.

On a year-to-date basis (April-November 2025), gross collections rose to Rs 14,75,488 crore, marking a strong 8.9 per cent annual growth.

The Net GST revenue for November stood at Rs 1,52,079 crore, increasing 1.3 per cent over last year. Further, the year-to-date net revenue reached Rs 12,79,434 crore, an annual growth of 7.3 per cent.

Refunds saw mixed movement as the total refunds was recorded at Rs 18,196 crore, down 4 per cent YoY, the export refunds rose 3.5 per cent, while domestic refunds dropped 12 per cent.

Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Assam recorded positive growth, led by Arunachal's strong 33 per cent rise. In contrast, sharp drops were seen in Mizoram (-41 per cent), Sikkim (-35 per cent) and Ladakh (-28 per cent), reflecting volatility in smaller tax bases.

Among major states, Maharashtra (3 per cent), Karnataka (5 per cent) and Kerala (7 per cent) posted moderate gains, while Gujarat (-7 per cent), Tamil Nadu (-4 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (-7 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (-8 per cent) and West Bengal (-3 per cent) reported declines. —*ANI*

Gold surges Rs 3,040 to Rs 1.33L/10g

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Gold prices surged by Rs 3,040 to Rs 1,33,200 per 10g in the national capital on Monday, tracking strong global trends and a weak US dollar, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Analysts said sustained jewellery demand amid the ongoing wedding season supported the precious metal.

The precious metal of 99.5 per cent purity zoomed by Rs 3,040 to Rs 1,32,600 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes).

Gold is now inching closer to its all-time high of Rs 1,34,800 per 10g (99.9 per cent purity) and Rs 1,34,200 per 10g (99.5 per cent), respectively, traders said.

"Gold extended last week's rally, supported by a softer US dollar, growing expectations of a Federal Reserve rate cut next week, upbeat forecasts from major banks, and continued robust central bank buying, all of which are helping drive the market higher," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Silver continued its upward march for the fifth straight day, surging by Rs 5,800 to Rs 1,77,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes), as per the association.

Spot gold rose by USD 42.29, or 1 per cent, to USD 4,261.52 per ounce, as the dollar index was quoting 0.19 per cent lower at 99.27, lending support to bullion prices. —*PTI*

ATF prices rise by 5.4%, LPG rates reduced

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices were increased by 5.4 per cent on Monday, while commercial LPG rates saw a reduction of Rs 10 per cylinder, as state-owned oil companies announced their monthly price revisions in line with global trends.

In Delhi, ATF prices surged by Rs 5,133.75 per kilolitre to reach Rs 99,676.77 per kl, marking the third consecutive monthly increase.

Prior hikes included a 1 per cent rise on 1 November and a 3.3 per cent increase on 1 October, putting additional strain on airlines, for which fuel constitutes around 40 per cent of operating costs.

Airlines have not yet commented on the impact of the latest price change.

Conversely, the cost of a 19kg commercial LPG cylinder, primarily used by hotels and restaurants, has been lowered to Rs 1,580.50 in Delhi. —*PTI*

SBI FACES ₹2,929 CR LOSS

Anil Ambani moves SC against SBI classification of his account as fraud

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Industrialist **Anil Ambani** has moved the Supreme Court challenging a Bombay High Court order that upheld State Bank of India's (SBI) decision to classify his and Reliance Communications' (RComm) accounts as fraud.

On 3 October, a Bombay High Court had dismissed Ambani's plea challenging the SBI decision and said there was no merit in the plea, essentially upholding SBI's decision. The order found Ambani, as the "promoter" and "person in control" of Reliance Communications, must face the consequences of the fraud classification.

In November 2020, SBI's committee initially classified the account as fraud. This classification was later withdrawn in September 2023, following a Supreme Court ruling that mandated giving borrowers a chance to respond before a fraud declaration.

SBI in June 2025 reclassified the accounts of RComm and Ambani as fraud, alleging misappropriation of funds through transactions that violated loan conditions. The bank later filed a complaint with the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), which searched premises linked to Reliance Communications and Ambani's residence. According to the CBI, SBI has reported losses of Rs 2,929.05 crore arising from the alleged misappropriation.

Ambani moved the HC, arguing that the bank had not followed the principles of natural justice as it did not grant him a hearing. Certain documents, based on which the classification orders were passed, were not provided to him initially and were furnished only after six months, the petition claimed. —*PTI*

Industry seeks rate cut amid positive GDP

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

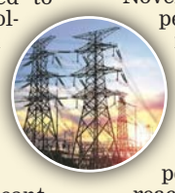
As the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) prepares for its policy announcement, a divergence of opinions emerges regarding interest rates. India's GDP growth soared to 8.2 per cent in the second quarter, prompting many economists to predict a pause in rate adjustments. However, industry leaders are advocating for a 25 basis-point rate cut to sustain economic momentum.

Mehul Pandya, MD and Group CEO of CareEdge Ratings, stated, "Both these developments (strong GDP growth and multi-year low inflation) are mutually opposing forces from an interest rate perspective." He added that global uncertainties could affect RBI's decisions. —*ANI*

Power consumption falls to 123.4B units in Nov

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Power consumption in India saw a slight decrease of 0.31 per cent, falling to 123.4 billion units (BU) in November, down from 123.79 BU in the same month last year. This decline is attributed to prudent usage of cooling appliances, with consumption having previously dropped by 5.8 per cent year-on-year in October to 131.07 BU.



Despite a significant rise in power consumption to 145.66 BU in September from 140.61 BU the previous year, unseasonal rains in October reduced the reliance on cooling devices. Experts noted that with the onset of winter in November, the need for heating appliances, such as geysers and blowers, remained minimal.

In contrast, peak power demand during November increased to 215.54 GW, up from 207.44 GW in November 2024. Notably, peak demand hit a record high of around 250 GW in May 2024.

Forecasts by government officials indicate that peak power demand could reach 277 GW in the summer of 2025. Experts anticipate more stable power consumption and demand beginning in December as temperatures continue to decline and the use of heating appliances rises. —*PTI*

Govt to divest 6% stake in Bank of Maharashtra

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The government has decided to divest up to 6 per cent stake in state-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BOM) through an Offer for Sale commencing from 2 December.

At the current market price, this move could help the government raise about Rs 2,600 crore.

Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Arunish Chawla said, "Offer for Sale in Bank of Maharashtra opens tomorrow for Non-Retail investors. Retail investors can bid on Wednesday. Government offers to disinvest 5% equity in the bank with an additional 1 per cent as a green shoe option."

The government currently holds a 79.60 per cent stake in the Pune-based lender.

With the stake sale, it will reduce its holding below 75 per cent, enabling the bank to meet the minimum public shareholding norm of 25 per cent mandated under the Securities Contract (Regulation) Rules by Sebi.

Sebi has provided forbearance to CPSEs and public sector financial institutions until August 2026.

Other public sector banks where the government holds stakes above the minimum threshold include Indian Overseas Bank (94.6 per cent), Punjab & Sind Bank (93.9 per cent), UCO Bank (91 per cent), and Central Bank of India (89.3 per cent). —*PTI*

AMID AI'S RAPID GROWTH

Working will become optional in 20 yrs: Musk

WASHINGTON, 1 DEC

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has said that in future, work may no longer be a necessity for people.

Speaking during an interview with Nikhil Kamath, Co-Founder of Zerodha, Musk predicted that rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and robotics will make working "optional" in less than 20 years.

Musk explained that with accelerating progress in AI and robotics, people may reach a stage where they can choose whether to work or not, like choosing whether to grow vegetables at home or buy them.

He acknowledged that some may doubt this prediction, noting that his statement may be played back after two decades to judge its accuracy. Still, he expressed confidence that the speed at which AI is improving will ultimately make work a matter of personal interest rather than survival.

Nikhil Kamath with Elon Musk *PHOTO: X/@nikhilkamathcio*

The discussion came after Kamath pointed out that the West is already moving from six-day workweeks to five, four, and even three days. Musk responded by saying that it does not apply when building a start-up or working on extremely difficult problems.

STARLINK LIMITATIONS

Elon Musk, the CEO of SpaceX, said that Starlink, his global satellite-based internet service, cannot beat traditional tower-based networks in densely populated cities.

"We can't beat something that's just a kilometre away, that is, the cell tower," he said.

Musk said the main limitation is the distance between Starlink satellites and users on the ground. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Shubman Gill's fitness assessment to start at CoE

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

India's T20I vice-captain Shubman Gill will be reporting at Bengaluru's Centre of Excellence on Monday for his mandatory fitness assessment protocols, which will determine his return to action for the upcoming five-match series against South Africa starting 9 December.Gill had sustained a neck injury while batting during the second day of the opening Test against South Africa in Kolkata and, since then, has missed the second Test and the ongoing ODI series. Since the Indian T20I squad wouldn't have any surprises, not even minor unless there are any injury issues the selection committee, headed by Ajit Agarkar, will be waiting for Gill's fitness report from the Sports Science team at the CoE.—*PTI*

Jaipur Open golf: Yuvraj, Ahlawat and Gandas to lead

JAIPUR, 1 DEC

Domestic regulars, including Yuvraj Sandhu, Veer Ahlawat and Manu Gandas, will vie for honours when the Rs 1 crore Jaipur Open golf tournament begins at the Rambagh Golf Club here on Tuesday. The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) event will feature a field of 126 professionals. The tournament boasts several leading Indian names such as PGTI Ranking leader Yuvraj Sandhu, Shaurya Bhattacharya, Arjun Prasad, Veer Ahlawat, Manu Gandas, Om Prakash Chouhan, Angad Cheema, Khalin Joshi and Ajeetesh Sandhu. Among the prominent foreign challengers are Bangladesh's Jamal Hossain, Badal Hossain, Md Akbar Hossain.—*PTI*

Record participation for National Shooting C'ships

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

A record 16,000-plus athletes across pistol, rifle, and shotgun events have qualified for the National Shooting Championships, which began on Monday, breaking the record of the previous edition, where over 13,500 had made the grade for the annual competition.While the shotgun competition began at the Karni Singh Ranges in Tughlaqabad on Monday, the pistol and rifle events will begin at Delhi and Bhopal, respectively, on 11 December.Over the next one month, competitions in all three disciplines will be conducted in seven categories Super Masters (70 years and above), Senior Masters (60-70 years), Masters (45-60 years), Seniors (Open), Juniors (21 years), Youth (19 years or before), Sub-Youth (16 years or before).—*PTI*

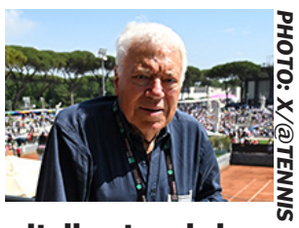


PHOTO: X/@TENNIS

Italian tennis icon Nicola Pietrangeli dies aged 92

SYDNEY, 1 DEC

During a break in the French Open final in 1960, Nicola Pietrangeli took his shoes off in the locker room. His socks were red with blood. In the first three sets, Chile's Luis Ayala had been tormenting Pietrangeli with drop shots and lobs, forcing the Italian tennis player to sprint forward and back until the skin peeled off his feet. He played the rest of the gruelling match on raw flesh. Still, he danced across the court with the elegance of a matador and claimed his second Roland Garros crown. His prize money: USD 150, he later recalled.—*PTI*

Friendly football match to be attended by legend Messi

PHOTO: PTI

HYDERABAD, 1 DEC

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy is practising alongside football players here ahead of a match against Lionel Messi's team on 13 December. The game is to be played at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal here as part of Messi's 'GOAT Tour 2025'.

However, details of the event would be finalised in a few days, official sources said on Monday.

The match, to be organised as part of the Congress government's celebrations to mark its second anniversary, would take place at the Uppal stadium here. Revanth Reddy, an avid football fan and player, is likely to begin the match by kicking the ball. He practised the game on Sunday night with a group of players.

Reddy had played a friendly football match with the students at the University of Hyderabad (UoH) here last year. The Congress government will be organising celebrations from 1 to 13 December to mark the completion of two years in office.

Lionel Messi PHOTO: PTI

Reddy will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge personally and invite them to the Telangana Rising Global Summit to be held on 8 and 9 December at the proposed Bharat Future City, an official release said.

Reddy further said his government will release the Telangana Rising Vision Document 2047 during the celebrations for the development of the state.

The World Cup-winning captain will be in Hyderabad after the Kolkata leg, the first of his tour. —*PTI*

Kohli's future not even a question: Coach Kotak

Kotak asked why Virat's place or longevity was being debated at all

RANCHI, 1 DEC

India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak feels speculations surrounding Virat Kohli's impending ODI future "should not exist" given fitness, form, and impact that the stalwart continues to make in 50-over cricket.

In the build-up to the three-match series, a few 'ifs and buts' emerged in the context of the 2027 ODI World Cup in Africa since both Kohli and Rohit Sharma play a single format, raising questions whether the two mega stars are in head coach Gautam Gambhir's scheme of things.

Leading with a note of exasperation, Kotak said he simply could not understand why Kohli's place or longevity was being debated at all.

"I really don't know why, actually, we need to look at all this," Kotak said after India's close 17-run win in the first ODI against South Africa here on Sunday.

Sitanshu Kotak, Dale Steyn PHOTO: PTI

"He's batting so well. Why do we need to talk about his future? The way he's performing, the way his fitness is, there are no questions about anything."

Kotak said clarity around roles, real-time learning, and the experience shared by senior players matter far more at this stage than long-range projections. And in that context, he insisted, Kohli remains indispensable.

Kohli retaining hunger on the field despite age: Steyn

Most sportsmen past their prime are happy to stay at home with their family and dog, but Virat Kohli, at 37, still behaves like a spring chicken on the field, diving and running, like he "wants to be there," South African pacer Dale Steyn says.

Despite retiring from T20s and Tests, Kohli has shown that his ODI game remains unimpacted. The superstar, scored his 52nd hundred in the first one-day against South Africa on Sunday.

"When you speak to most 37 or 38-year-olds, they say they hate leaving home, their dog, their kids. But he (Virat) is in a place mentally where he's eager to be out there playing for India.

You can see it when he's running between the wickets, fielding, and diving. He's mentally young, fresh, and wants to be here," Steyn told JioStar on Sunday.

"He's played over 300 ODIs in 15–16 years, so the experience is inside him. It's in his body and mind.

Even if he arrived here after three days of rain, it wouldn't have affected his preparation. He's mentally strong, visualises well, and can see the ball onto the bat. That's what the best in the world do. —*PTI*

Virat Kohli is celebrating his 52nd ODI century in Ranchi on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

MIXED TEAM TABLE TENNIS WC

Despite Manika Batra's stunning win over World No. 8 Ito, India went down to Japan at the ITTF Mixed Team WC in Chengdu, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Manika, Manav impress, but India loses again

CHENGDU, 1 DEC

India suffered its second straight loss in Group 2 at the ITTF Mixed Team World Cup as it went down 4-8 to Japan at the Sichuan Gymnasium in Chengdu.

Shunsuke Togami and Miwa Harimoto gave Japan the perfect start as they beat Akash Pal and Yashaswini Ghorpade 3-0 (11-6, 11-9, 11-5) in the mixed doubles rubber.

However, Manika Batra and Manav Thakkar kept India alive in the tie by stunning higher-ranked opponents in their respective singles rubbers.

While Manika won 2-1 (9-11, 11-8, 11-8) against World No. 8 Mima Ito, Manav took down World No. 8 Sora Matsushima 2-1 (11-9, 11-4, 6-11) to reduce the deficit to just one game.

But Ghorpade and Diya Chitale could not take the tie to a deciding men's doubles rubber as they lost 0-3 (8-11, 3-11, 5-11) to Ito and Hina Hayata.

On Sunday, India lost its first match 6-8 to Croatia.

India faces Australia, which also lost both its matches to Japan and Croatia, in its final group-stage match on Tuesday.

Only the top two teams from the group will qualify for the next round. —*PTI*

Red Bull voices regret over claims Kimi Antonelli let Lando Norris pass

PARIS, 1 DEC

Red Bull expressed regret Monday following "clearly incorrect" comments alleging that Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli had let Lando Norris past at the Qatar Grand Prix, influencing the Formula 1 title fight. Standings leader Norris was in fifth place behind Antonelli toward the end of Sunday's race when the Italian slid wide, and Norris overtook him for fourth place. That allowed the McLaren driver to stay 12 points in front of Red Bull's Max Verstappen ahead of the season finale this week in Abu Dhabi.

F1: Red Bull to announce 2026 driver lineups today

Yuki Tsunoda looks set to lose his Red Bull race seat with the energy drink company's two Formula One teams scheduled to announce their 2026 driver lineups on Tuesday. That would leave two seats at Racing Bulls to be filled, with one currently occupied by New Liam Lawson, but Tsunoda and highly-rated Anglo-Swedish F2 racer Lindblad are also in the running. "We will announce on Tuesday what the driver lineup is. —*PTI*

JUNIOR HOCKEY WC

Germany confirms QFs place; SA secures second spot in Pool A

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Germany edged ahead early in the first quarter through Jonas von Gersum against Ireland in the FIH Junior Men's World Cup 2025 PHOTO: PTI

Defending champion Germany confirmed its place in the quarterfinal of the FIH Junior Men's World Cup 2025 after a 5-1 win over Ireland on Monday.

The No. 1-ranked junior side trumped the Irish in a physical contest to seal its third win on the trot, cementing top spot in Pool A.

Germany edged ahead early in the first quarter through Jonas von Gersum. Top-scorer Ben Hasbach made a run across the backline from right to left to find space in the D, before teeing up von Gersum, who dived full-stretch to push it in.

Ireland opted for the chancy mode of attack, playing long balls into the circle, hoping its strikers could get a favourable deflection. Its players, who were tasked with pressing Germany hard, had to deal with the punishing heat in Madurai, which was displaying its full effect for the first time this tournament.

The 22-ranked side almost equalised when Jake Fulton was sent 1v1 on goal, but German defender Jannik Enaux managed to trail him and get a last-ditch tackle in before he could let out a shot.

The Irish managed to keep the opponent at bay till four minutes after the half-time break, when captain Paul Glander struck home a Penalty Corner (PC) to double the lead. Neville Rothman's side's resistance against the possession-dominant Germany eventually broke in the fourth quarter, when it conceded three goals in the space of three minutes.

Hasbach once again turned provider as von Gersum scored an identical goal, his second of the match. Christian Franz positioned himself at the post after injecting a PC in and turned in a lucky deflection to seal the deal after Lukas Kossel's Penalty Stroke. The lower-ranked side did manage to get one back when Samuel Dale turned in a chest-high scooped pass from Rex Dunlop into the net.

"It was the first time we were facing a team opting for man-marking. But we knew that we were fitter than them [Ireland] and could make use of that," Hasbach told Sportstar at the end of the contest. —*PTI*

Women's hockey chief coach Singh resigns

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Indian women's hockey team chief coach Harendra Singh on Monday resigned from the post with immediate effect, citing "personal reasons".

According to sources, Harendra sent an email to Hockey India informing the apex body that he is resigning with immediate effect.

Dutch tactician Sjoerd Marijne, who was head coach of the side that finished fourth at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, could return as the chief coach, according to sources.

Marijne had resigned as head coach of the women's hockey team in August 2021.

Harendra, who previously coached the United States men's hockey team, had assumed the post of chief coach in April 2024.

Before that, he had coached India's junior men's team, which won the World Cup in 2016 in Lucknow. —*PTI*

Mbappé scores, but Real Madrid is frustrated by Girona

MADRID, 1 DEC

Real Madrid failed to return to the top of the Spanish league on Sunday night after being held 1-1 at relegation-threatened Girona.

Kylian Mbappé converted a 67th-minute penalty after Azzedine Ounahi had put the hosts ahead in the 45th at Montilivi Stadium.

Mbappé, who scored four goals midweek against Olympiakos in the Champions League, almost won it for Madrid when his right-footed strike from near the penalty spot just missed deep into stoppage time.

"I liked how the team reacted, even though it wasn't enough to get the win," Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso said.

"In the second half, we improved, and we could've won coming from behind. We couldn't finish the chances we created."

Madrid complained it should have had a penalty in the 80th after a challenge on Rodrygo.

It was the third straight league draw for Madrid, which relinquished the league lead on Saturday after Barcelona beat Alaves 3-1. Barcelona is one point ahead of Madrid after 14 matches. —*PTI*

FIH JUNIOR MEN'S WORLD CUP

India look to polish grey areas against Switzerland

MADURAI, 1 DEC

In-form but untested Indian team will look to fine-tune its grey areas while continuing its winning run against Switzerland in the final group league encounter ahead of the knockout stage at the FIH Junior Men's World Cup here on Tuesday.

Both India are Switzerland are unbeaten in Pool B with two wins from as many matches, but the hosts are on top of the table by virtue of superior goal difference.

It was a goal-fest for the Indians in the first two games in Chennai as they beat Chile 7-0 before thrashing Oman 17-0.

India's captain Rohit and head coach PR Sreejesh during the pre-match press conference in Madurai on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Switzerland, on the other hand, beat Oman 4-0 and then eked out a narrow 3-2 win over Chile.

And come Tuesday, the world No. 2 side is expected to get the better of Switzerland comfortably.

But some concerns remain for India ahead of the knockout stage.

Attack is the best form of defence: Sreejesh

Indian junior men's team head coach PR Sreejesh said he expects more from the side's attack despite the glut of league-stage goals, ahead of the final FIH Junior Men's World Cup 2025 Pool B game against Switzerland.

The head coach had said he wanted his players to show a 'killer attitude' in front of goal after the side's opening game against Chile, after which they scored 17 goals without reply against Oman. But Sreejesh says there is more work to be done. —*PTI*

Aditi Ashok finishes tied 11th in Spain

MALAGA, 1 DEC

Indian golfers Aditi Ashok Avani Prashanth and carded 1-under 71 each to finish tied 11th at the season-ending Andalucía Costa del Sol Open de España here.

Among the other Indians, Hitaashee Bakshi (69) was T-43, Pranavi Urs (73) was T-47, and Diksha Dagar (75) was T-71.France's Nastasia Nadaud stormed to victory, firing a 66 (-6) to win the event by four shots on the Ladies European Tour (LET). Avani and Aditi played in the same group on the final day and carded 71 each.—*PTI*